

FIRST AID
TO THE
OPERA-GOER

MARY FITCH WATKINS

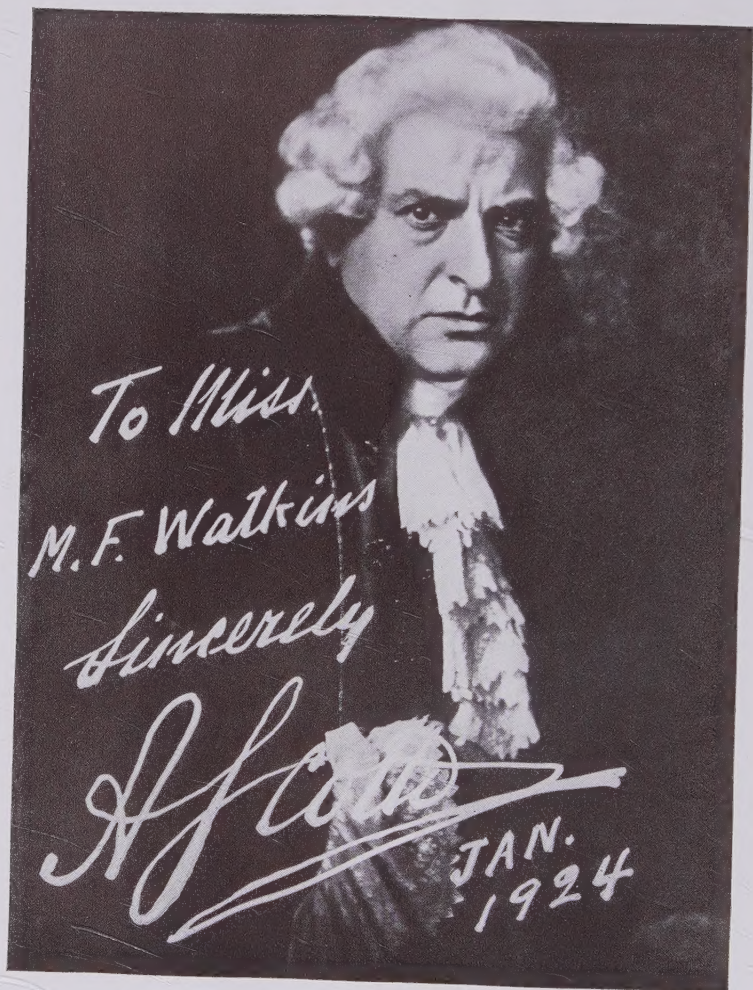


FIRST AID TO THE OPERA-GOER



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ANTONIO SCOTTI AS SCARPIA IN *LA TOSCA*

FIRST AID TO THE OPERA-GOER

BY
MARY FITCH WATKINS

With Eight Illustrations from Photographs



NEW YORK
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To
MY MOTHER

OPERA FOR EVERY ONE

A Preface by

ANTONIO SCOTTI

EDITOR'S NOTE: Mr. Scotti has been a prominent figure at the Metropolitan Opera in New York for twenty-five years, where he has invested all of the great baritone rôles with the glamour of his rare artistry, his dramatic genius, and his superb vocal endowment. Very recently he was given a gala celebration seldom equaled in the annals of the Metropolitan to mark his quarter century of brilliant association with that institution. Mr. Scotti was born in Naples, and made his operatic début as Amonasro in *Aïda*, at Malta in 1889. He has sung leading rôles in all the great houses of Europe and South America, and has between seasons organized and headed his own company in a tour of the smaller American cities.

THE Opera? Of course, the opera is my life! Thirty-four years I have been on the stage, and twenty-five of those years of work have been spent right in New York, so I may speak very feelingly and with some insight.

Probably nowhere in the world is opera given as perfectly as it is here, yet even so I must confess that at times the prospect is, to me, discouraging. The country grows, the cities expand—by what leaps and bounds and remarkable multiplication within my own memory!—but the *Opera*—or may we say the *need* of it?—does not grow in proportion; indeed it falls far behind the great march of progress. You require your automobiles (one to every eight or nine of the population, is it not so?), your moving pictures, your radio, your theaters. In some cities you are willing to sustain a yearly deficit with your local symphony orchestras, but your *Opera*—*no!* A traveling company with the best in scenery, orchestra, and a galaxy of well-known “stars” must struggle for the promise of a practical guarantee. Oftener than not it is refused, and should the company have the temerity to gamble on the subscriptions, they usually go away sadder, wiser, and poorer. How different is Europe, with an opera house in

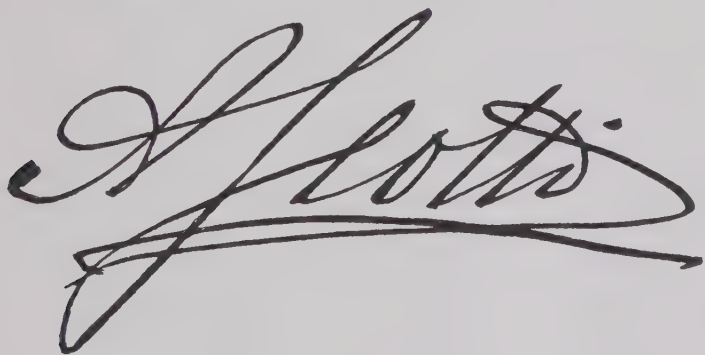
every city large enough to boast a charter. It is not a question of *luxury* with them; their opera is as essential a part of municipal provision as their transportation, their water-works, their bakeries, butchers, and coal-dealers. But they are old countries absorbing wisdom with their traditions. America is young and in a hurry. "Some day, when we have time," is the favorite evasion. I used the word *municipal* just now, and right there is one of the big secrets of America's lagging in artistic progress. For example, one hears all over the world about the greatness of the Metropolitan Opera House—good! A stranger from, say, Rome or Vienna asks to be shown the wonderful place of which he has heard. What does he see? In spite of the glories of its interior, from its outer aspect it might be a garage! The same is true in Chicago, the only other city which boasts a permanent company. Perhaps when politicians turn from the oiling of their political machines long enough to study the greater good of the people, money may be voted for Art, and little auditoriums will spring up everywhere, in pseudo-classic beauty, side by side with the automobile factories. But that will be the Millennium!

For the present all the big institutions, museums, galleries, libraries, theaters, concert and opera halls, originate in private enterprises, and are built upon the foundation of Business; and Business seldom marries Art. Now America leads the world in commercial enterprise, so one may be forced to one's own conclusions. But I love America passionately. More than two-thirds of my career has been built among you. "I *belong* here," as was so kindly said to me upon the overwhelming occasion of my twenty-fifth anniversary at the Metropolitan—and so I am intensely and ardently interested in the development of your musical appetite.

In Atlanta, where I inaugurated, twelve years ago, the yearly visit of the Company, not only has the occasion grown into an annual festival week in which the city is practically given over to the artistic feast which the opera spreads before the people, but it has brought into town much incidental business. Dress-makers, restaurants, taxis, hotels, even the post-office and the telegraph companies profit enormously by those seven days of musical celebration and increased population. So you see, it *can* be done, this harmonious uniting of Art and Commerce! Let those guarantors of Philharmonics and Symphonies give themselves diverting variety in the losses they accept so patiently each year. Let them promise, say, a modest third, to Opera—and see what may happen!

There is fine artist material in America too, especially the women's voices. But where shall the coming stars practice, gain routine and répertoire, experience and poise? Off to Europe they fly because we cannot provide them with practical ladders to climb upon. Our two big companies are the ultimate goals of a singer, rarely the stepping stones; here the top is too high for the beginner to climb, they get lost and discouraged. The Caruso Memorial Fund has been founded for the purpose of finding and developing such worthy young aspirants, setting them upon their artistic feet ready to stand alone, from which point they will advance, it is hoped, in sturdy strides.

But all these suggestions are merely drops in the bucket. The real fundamental thing is for the people—those many millions living all over the land in small cities and big—to awaken and demand for themselves, *because they want it*, that delightful, uplifting, diverting, and colorful form of recreation and entertainment which is called Opera. This little book, or any other effort which contributes to general understanding and appreciation among those who *have* opera, and still better, awakens a realization of what they are missing, among those who *have not*, is a step in the right direction.



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Photographs by Mishkin, N. Y.



FOREWORD

No attempt has here been made to cover the entire field of Opera; such a work would be far too cumbersome and erudite a volume to fulfill the simple purpose of these pages. Rather is it an appeal from one amateur opera-goer, who has been carried far upon the waves of an all-consuming enthusiasm for this special form of diversion, to some other who may be less partial: an effort to convince him of the very real delights purchasable for the price of the humblest place in the opera house.

To tell the stories of our best current operas temptingly, as you might to your husband, reluctantly dragged to the music drama against his expressed desires—to tell them so as to catch the ear of your débutante daughter and give her pause, as she considers the rival merits of the latest “show” in town—or to lure your wife from the absorptions of the bridge table—and even to tell them so that you, who are doubtless a regular subscriber to seats for years, may find in the familiar operas new highlights and yet more alluring shadows—or simply as an antidote to the indigestible libretto and its tabloid synopsis—such has been my intention and desire.

To do this with the accuracy born of copious notes at actual performances, diligent communion with scores and word-books, free consultation of the highest authorities and the most enlightening commentaries, has been my goal, but to do it without a clutter of unnecessary facts and tiresome data, to leave the trusting mind of the “gentle reader” free to enjoy itself.

There will doubtless be criticism of certain omissions, but I can only plead the limitations of space, and confess to a choice directed toward those old operas which endure from year to year in every company's prospectus, and those “novelties” which have proved their worth by surviving more than a tentative season or two. Composers are legion and their output large, and one has to stop somewhere. Only one of the “Manons” and one of the “Faust” legends have been included, and none of the operas taken from the Shakespearean plays or the age-old fairy-tales. As for Parsifal, he should have a little book all his own.

In my studies I am indebted to the following authorities: W. J. Henderson, H. E. Krehbiel, George Bernard Shaw, Gustav Kobbé, E. Singleton, Lavignac, Wagner, Liszt, Bellaigue, Berlioz, Scudo, Reissman, Pougin, Richard Aldrich, and James Huneker, among others. I also wish to acknowledge the invaluable assistance and advice of Mr. William Guard, of the Metropolitan Opera, and of Miss Ethel Priscilla Potter.

M. F. W.

New York, May, 1924.

FIRST AID TO THE OPERA-GOER

L'AFRICAINNE

By GIACOMO MEYERBEER

First produced in Paris, 1865

"L'AFRICAINNE" may be said to be a truly Victorian exploitation of the South Sea Islands. They were not so exhausted by the usages of fiction, or for that matter, fact, in those days, and Scribe, the librettist, had a clear field and a wide scope for his ingenuity. The composer must have taken exception to several of his flights of fancy, for they were twenty years getting together on the matter. When finally the date of the *première* arrived, poor Meyerbeer was so worn out with this and that, that he expired before he could witness a performance. Although in a way a posthumous brain-child, this opera has endured among the composer's most popular works and you will straightway understand why, when you have once heard it sung. There is no mental strain involved from beginning to end; it consistently lives up to the definition of grand opera as a highly spectacular and artificial dramatic product, with suitable music, and as such we gratefully accept it.

ACT I shows us the Royal Council Chamber of Lisbon. It is empty for the moment, for it is just before the assembly. The Lady Inez and her attendant, Anna, come in. It is a strange place for them to be, and they seem uneasy and not quite sure why they are there, but we know it is to elucidate the plot before any more action takes place. Inez is betrothed to Vasco da Gama, of schoolbook fame, but he is presumably missing with all other hands on board the lost ship of the explorer, Bartholomew Diaz. Poor Inez is not only distressed over his loss, but finds it doubly hard to bear because it precipitates another and distasteful match which her father Don Diego has long had next his heart. If noth-

ing intervenes she will now be affianced without delay to Don Pedro, the President of the Council. Having relieved her feelings in melodious complaint she drags her companion away just in time.

Now the wise men of Lisbon file in and take their places. The subject before the meeting is the loss of Diaz and his ship. The King has sent word that he would favor a searching expedition, and they all shake their heads and discuss the *pros* and *cons*, when suddenly one of their number comes in late and announces that one of the survivors of the wreck is actually in the antechamber. The Council confesses itself thrilled and eagerly settles down to hear and see. The officer comes in, and to their intense surprise it is Vasco. A *solar plexus* blow for the schemes of Don Diego! He managed in some way to drift ashore, and to bring home with him two captives, Nelusko and Selika. The latter is our heroine, a dusky beauty who, the title insists, is African, but we can see at a glance that she hails from the Indies. Vasco is very proud of having got safely home with these very tangible proofs that the world is not flat and *does* contain other continents than Europe, and has his hands full of charts to confirm his theories. Having said his startling say, he tactfully retires to allow the meeting to talk him over, which they lose no time in doing. In the midst of the excitement which ensues, Don Pedro manages to purloin one of the more important charts, while no one is looking. Then taking advantage of his position as Chief, he persuades the Council that there is nothing at all in da Gama's theories, and that it would be folly to back him in any such mad expedition. Privately, of course, he intends to use the stolen chart for a voyage of his own, which shall incidentally win him the hand of the fair Inez. Vasco now returns full of enthusiasm, only to meet with the upsetting news that the Council are not interested. In a perfect rage, he says things which he will soon regret, for the Council do not enjoy being called unprogressive and idiotic, and promptly order him clapped into prison to cool his temper.

ACT II takes us to his spacious cell, where the unfortunate hero is trying to forget his troubles in slumber. Beside him sits Selika, watching him like a mother, and crooning him a lullaby into which the composer has infused some flavor of the exotic and tropical. Selika is quite mad over this first white man who has ever entered her life, and for love of him she joyfully performs the duties of a slave, although in her own corner of the world she is a queen. We learn this from the respectful but ardent lips of Nelusko, who

hotly resents her degraded state, and who, loving her himself, aims a dagger neatly at the sleeping man's throat. Selika protects her lover and sends off her compatriot, rebuked and surly. She is not very happy herself, on the whole, for during her brief visit to the Council Chamber she heard about Inez, and her own case seems hopeless. She is, however, magnanimous for the moment, and when Vasco wakes up, she rewards him with a smile and a song, and a most important revelation of a quick, easy and secret route over the seas to her islands.

In the midst of their duet, Don Pedro with Inez and his retinue comes graciously into the cell. The lady has purchased the life of her lover by marrying Pedro according to her father's wishes, and they have come to break the happy news. Vasco, rather heartlessly indifferent to what Inez has done for him, sings lustily of his joy in the prospect of another voyage in the near future, but his ardor is dampened by Don Pedro's announcement that he is about to start on one himself, and is taking Nelusko along as pilot. So Vasco's thunder is stolen, and he laments heartily as part of the final *septette*, in which Inez grieves quite pardonably, Selika exults over her own private thoughts, and Don Pedro dominates and struts, while Nelusko and Anna contribute the necessary chest tones to the ensemble, as the curtain falls.

ACT III. When the stage carpenter first saw the specifications for this scene, he must either have fainted or else gone mad with creative joy, for certainly the order is a large one. We behold a lengthwise cross-section of Don Pedro's ship, showing not only the promenade, but the lower decks as well, with a glimpse of the cabins. It is an elaborate affair, and far more intricate than the action seems to demand, but its chief virtue is its ability to suffer shipwreck and destruction and yet retain its perfection against the next performance.

Don Alvar, one of the Councillors who has cast in his lot with Don Pedro, has, not without reason, become suspicious of their pilot, Nelusko, for two ships of the fleet have been lost, and the flag-ship seems in danger. As they discuss the matter, suddenly another ship draws up beside this one with the ease of a taxicab, and Vasco da Gama, its commander, comes aboard. He is actuated by the most humane motive, for although naturally his love for Don Pedro is negligible, still he cannot see a fellow creature upon the wrong channel, bound for destruction, without a small effort to save him. He points out to his rival the mistakes upon his chart, but Pedro cannot understand such generosity, and suspects

that Vasco is here merely for the purpose of communicating with Inez, who is on board. Acting on this supposition, he most ungratefully has the man seized and put in chains. Almost immediately the elements, as if in league with the cause of justice, grow disturbed to the point of tempest, and the ship, although apparently one of the steadiest ever built, is run upon a reef. What happens to Vasco's boat, we do not know, but Nelusko has been busy upon a scheme of his own, invoking the heathen gods of the sea, in a ferocious chant. In a moment, at his signal, hordes of crawling, blood-thirsty savages clamber over the side of the vessel, and proceed amidst the utmost confusion to massacre practically every one in sight, as the curtain falls.

ACT IV is the most gorgeous of the opera and the delights of the South Sea Isles are exhibited lavishly for our delectation. Amid tropical splendor we observe a Hindu temple on the left, and a most elaborate palace just visible on the right. Vasco, who seems to have been spared in the late unpleasantness on Pedro's ship, is now about to lose his life at the hands of the cannibals who caper about him, gesticulating and scolding in terrible tones. At the critical moment, however, Selika arrives, looking like the Queen of Sheba, and uses her influence in her adored one's behalf. This is her country and she has assumed her crown and estate, to the great surprise and delight of Vasco, who agrees to marry her forthwith. She, too, seems to think it would be advisable, so in elaborate ceremonial, assisted at great and diverting length by the entire *corps de ballet*, they become man and wife. All is rose color, until a familiar *colorature* voice sounds from somewhere on the shore. It is Inez, who sings not only because she also has managed to escape the shipwreck and massacre, but because she is a widow.

Vasco's affections are as unstable as the sands. The very sound of this once dear voice seems to revive in him the most consuming passion for the singer, in spite of the fact that he has but just acquired a royal bride. He is frightfully agitated and Selika is frightfully upset, as the curtain falls.

Now we behold a nearer view of Selika's palace, and the adjacent gardens. The poor Queen might be pardoned if she were plotting the most savage revenge upon her faithless bridegroom; but quite the contrary—her unselfish nature seems to expand under adversity. Now, with the two lovers in her hands, she could do away with them by the turn of a finger, and no one the wiser, but instead, she sends for the ardent Nelusko and after some diffi-

culty, prevails upon him to give the two a nice ship and let them go back to Portugal or where they will. After they have sailed away, however, she would like Nelusko to meet her on the high cliff above the palace, where something in her tragic manner makes us suspect she is planning a *rendezvous* with death.

The scene changes to the spot she has just indicated, and the stage is almost filled with the spreading branches and pinkish purple blossoms of an extraordinary tree, the manchineel, the fragrance of which is as fatal as carbon monoxide. We have never seen such a tree, and we never hope to see one, but Scribe insisted that it is a possibility, and why should there not be one? Selika, keeping well to windward of its deadliness, leans far over the cliff, watching the boat set out to sea, which bears her husband and another woman. It cannot be a pleasant sight, and we scarcely blame her when, having given melodious utterance to her woe, she lies down under the blossoms and seeks Nirvana. Nelusko, coming punctually to his appointment, finds just what he had feared, and loses very little time in singing his regrets and lying down to expire beside her.

Thus ends a chapter in the life of Vasco da Gama which the history-books have ignored.

AÏDA

By GIUSEPPE VERDI

First Sung in Cairo, 1871

"AÏDA" is safe, sane and diverting, a thoroughly pleasing relaxation for eye and ear. It is the epitome of all the highest essentials of opera as it was enjoyed before Progressives, Modernists and Reactionaries sought to "improve" it. Written at the order of the Khedive of Egypt, and first given under the most favorable auspices, it has progressed through the years with an infallible popularity which is easy to understand after we have attended even a fair performance. It sparkles with light, color, melody, drama—strung on an excellent plot.

ACT I is divided into two scenes. In the first we see as the curtain goes up, a hall in the Palace of the King at Memphis. Rhadames, the hero, is being informed by the High Priest, Ramfis, of the latest pronouncement of the Oracle. Apparently a young warrior is to be the leader of the Egyptian troops against the Ethiopians, now hammering against the gates of Thebes. Rhadames deduces that his own name has been favorably considered and as soon as he is alone he sings of what such a possibility would mean to him—victory, honor, and a chance of obtaining the beautiful Ethiopian slave, Aïda, as his bride. There is probably no individual in this enlightened epoch who does not know at least snatches of this song. Owing to the industrious and unceasing propaganda of hurdy-gurdy, phonograph, pianola and restaurant orchestra, "*Celesta Aïda*" has become a household lyric, but it is none the less very beautiful, and it behooves every one to be on hand for the rise of the curtain or they will miss it.

As the tenor pauses for breath, Amneris, the daughter of Pharaoh, strolls in. She has heard rumors of the campaign and desires the details from Headquarters. They join in a duet in which *she* informs us that she secretly loves Rhadames to distraction, and *he* tells us at the same time that he certainly hopes Amneris does not suspect his interest in Aïda. As they are sing-

ing, Aïda herself slips in. She being an Ethiopian, we are perfectly justified in expecting to behold a lady of sable complexion, but she is also the prima donna of the caste, and pulchritude is a consideration. As a slight concession to the libretto, she usually employs a cocoa-colored face powder. Happily the days of the long brown arm tights have departed, lo, these many years, from popular usage among the principals, but one may in a later act behold them in all their glory upon the limbs of the chorus-ladies when impersonating the Ethiopian prisoners.

Aïda is very unhappy, very much in love, and very much upset by present complications, but she joins her voice and her tears to the general melody. Amneris, however, did not miss the look which the lovers exchanged at meeting, and soon suspects that Aïda's emotion is a little too sentimental to be entirely for her native land. The arrival of Pharaoh and his retinue puts an end to their conversation, and a stir is created by a messenger who staggers in with the unpleasant news of the advance of the Ethiopians, led by their king.

"My father!" breathes Aïda, for the enlightenment of the audience only.

The messenger, having enthusiastically sung his brief moment, retires, and the king at once begins martial preparations by setting Rhadames at the head of the Expeditionary Forces. This increases the awkwardness of Aïda's situation. She loves Rhadames as well as her parents and other relatives, yet both sides cannot have the victory. Her gentle mind is much confused, but she diplomatically decides for the moment to join in the cheers of the populace as the troops depart. When she is alone, she still calls to Rhadames to return victorious, then, utterly miserable, prays to her gods to straighten things out as best they can.

The second scene of ACT I is the temple of Ptah. A hidden priestess is singing (probably clad in a tailored suit and hat) somewhere in the wings. Other lesser virgins are visibly circling about in white garments, agitating palms and expressing their religious fervor with decorous agility. Ramfis and his clergy add their chant to the women's, struggling valiantly with the repeated syllable of "Ptah." In the midst of all this devotion Rhadames enters, and the priest gives him the consecrated armor and, according to their quaint custom, a veil, while clouds of incense make it increasingly difficult to sing. But Ramfis achieves the delivery of a few melodious instructions, together with another hymn to the gods, beseeching a kindly eye upon the young captain, and every one joins in this with great effect as the curtain falls.

ACT II. This act also contains two scenes. The first is a terrace in the apartments of the princess. Amneris is dressing for the municipal welcome about to be accorded Rhadames and his victorious troops. She is plainly enjoying little thrills of anticipation as her women chatter about the hero, and soon cannot restrain her own desire to sing of his charms. Her slaves set jewels, perfumes and the necessary cosmetics before her, and when she beholds in a mirror the result of her efforts, she is much gratified and says so in song, while some capering little pickaninnies dance most delightfully for her amusement and ours. We are sorry to see them trot off, but here is the gloomy Aïda, bringing Amneris' crown. The princess wants to try a little strategy, so she sends every one else away, and then sweetly announces to Aïda that Rhadames has been killed. The devoted girl pales under her *café-au-lait*, and Amneris, hissing unpleasantly, "Ha, I thought so!" declares the perfect futility of Aïda's passion. "A mere slave, ridiculous! I, the princess, love the man!" Aïda is appropriately crushed, but sustains herself with the thought that were it not for this horrid war, she would be in her own land as powerful a princess as ever Amneris could brag of being. Now suddenly from within are heard the voices of the council demanding the death of Amonasro, the Ethiopian king. This is extremely painful for Aïda, but when she asks a little human sympathy from her mistress, Amneris sweeps out stonily, leaving the unhappy slave to call once upon her pitying gods, as she slowly droops from the scene.

The second scene is the most superbly brilliant of the opera. It is the gate of Thebes, where the populace awaits the Victory Parade. The landscape is dotted with sphinxes, there is a heathen temple on the left, while on the right is the royal reviewing stand. To music which emphasizes its importance and dignity, the Court takes its place. Not a face is missing: Pharaoh, Amneris, Ramfis, Aïda and all the ladies, and gentlemen, priests, virgins and accessories. It is an admirably arranged parade, with no tedious waiting in the sun for the spectators. No sooner are they comfortably settled than the troops begin to defile. The march has a familiar ring, a vigorous martial blare vastly pleasing to the ear, and is played on the stage upon long, especially-manufactured trumpets exactly like all those employed by the Heavenly Host in sacred art. The second squad of trumpeters deliberately lifts the music to a full tone higher with the startling effect of lifting with them the whole pitch and tone of the stage excitement. The marching ranks are diversified with chariots,

color-bearers holding the most bizarre of standards, dancing-girls with the spoils of victory and other material.

At last, in a burst of choral enthusiasm, Rhadames is borne upon the scene. Amneris, proud and pleased, places the traditional wreath upon his brow, while Aïda, torn to rags of emotion, struggles to keep calm. Pharaoh is delighted with everything; he is in a very expansive mood, offering the young hero whatever reward he cares to name. But before he makes this momentous decision, Rhadames requests that the prisoners be brought in. They appear promptly, the ranks of ragged Ethiopians, liberally provided with the odious brown-sleeved shirts of which we promised a glimpse. They look warm, hideous, and in immediate need of bathing. Amonasro, their king, falls at Pharaoh's feet, begging for mercy, yet at the same time implying that he is far from admitting permanent defeat. Aïda, in a wretched state at beholding her father thus abject, yet manages to comprehend that he does not wish her to betray that his rank is higher than the captain he professes to be. The High Priests feel that it would be inadvisable to allow any of these remarkably unattractive prisoners to remain alive, but Rhadames steps in and claims as his boon the freedom of the conquered, retaining only Amonasro and Aïda as hostages. Although Pharaoh questions the wisdom of this, and the High Priest strenuously opposes it, the favor is granted. Then Pharaoh, still in mellow mood, is moved to even greater generosity. In an excess of enthusiasm, he bestows upon him the hand of his arrogant daughter, thus making him heir to the throne. Rhadames is a little awkward in the reception of this very embarrassing honor, but recovers his poise just in time, which, however, is more than poor Aïda achieves. She is injudicious enough to show her feelings very plainly, although her father comforts her with promises of revenge.

ACT III. The scene is on the banks of the Nile, on a pleasant moonlight night. The music tells us just how lovely and mysterious is the landscape, how smoothly the water flows. From the delightful little temple on the right comes the sound of vigorous chanting to Isis. Suddenly a boat glides to the shore in the rear. Ramfis is conducting Amneris, heavily veiled, with her women, to the temple to keep her marriage vigil. They soon pass and all is still again. Now Aïda appears, strolling by the river to ease her fevered brow in the evening air. Rhadames has hinted that he might be there, and she has made up her mind that if he says farewell, she had better end her sorrows in the Nile. She

sings sadly and at length about all her difficulties, and becomes more and more homesick and miserable. When you hear her wail again and again, "*My pew, oh, my pew*" ("*Mai più*"), do not think that she refers to her parish temple, for she is moaning sadly like the Raven, "Nevermore!" and the music is as sad and as pure and as beautiful as she. As she pauses she sees among the trees, not her lover, but her parent. He is very sympathetic, but distraught with plans for their freedom and ultimate victory. They sing together in a gorgeous harmony of soprano and baritone, and almost forget their troubles. However, Amonasro's plan is for Aïda to tease from Rhadames the route of their next sally against the Ethiopians, so that he can be surprised and routed. This scarcely appeals to Aïda's highest sense of honor, but she finally agrees after her father has wheedled her by singing of the natural beauties of her homeland, and recalling to her the violent deaths recently occurring in her immediate family, ending up with a patriarchal curse or two. As he then observes Rhadames approaching, he tactfully disappears.

The lovers meet and sing, and embrace and sing, and embrace again. Rhadames is in a mood for any foolishness to-night. He has a plan by which he will, on the morrow, go to the battlefield instead of the altar, and when once more victorious, will make a clean breast of the whole matter to Pharaoh and claim Aïda as his reward. This plan does not appeal so strongly to Aïda, there is an unpleasant element of uncertainty—and what is more, Amneris is a factor not to be ignored and not to be trusted. She greatly prefers her own scheme—that he flee with her at once to her own country. Rhadames is surprisingly easy to convince. As they go off through the trees, she remembers her promise to her father.

"Oh, by the way, Rhadames dear, which way do the Egyptians go? It would be so awkward meeting them!"

"Well, then, we had better avoid the pass of Napata," he replies carelessly. But Amonasro, behind a tree, does not miss a word. He now feels that the time has come to clear up the situation, so comes boldly out and hails the lovers, informing the startled and dismayed young hero that he has betrayed his country to the enemy *King and Princess Royal*! Rhadames, overcome and thoroughly ashamed of his moment of weakness, raves wildly about his own treasonable behavior; even Aïda cannot calm him, and when Amneris and Ramfis suddenly appear, he gives himself up to the guards without a struggle on the first accusation of "Traitor!" Amonasro rashly attempts violence toward the per-

son of the princess, but Rhadames is too quick for him, and averts a tragedy, at the same time urging father and daughter to escape while escape is practicable. Aïda hangs back mournfully to look her last upon her noble lover, but as Amneris is plainly in no mood for trifling, it seems better, on the whole, to acquiesce.

ACT IV. Two scenes once more, the first of which shows a passage in Pharaoh's palace, near the entrance to the underground Court of Justice, and on the left is another door leading to Rhadames' prison. Amneris is "discovered" drooping beside the door. Obviously she has suffered mentally since the events of the last act. It was not pleasant to trap her lover in the act of eloping with another woman, still less is it agreeable to contemplate his consequent execution. She has one trump card left, and resolves to play it. She orders up the unhappy Rhadames, who enters promptly, his manner frigid and extremely unresponsive. The news of Amonasro's death she imparts to him with evident enjoyment, but confesses that Aïda is still unharmed. Now if Rhadames will give up this silly obsession for the slave, she, Amneris, will pull the proper wires to effect his release. The proposition fails to interest Rhadames; he tells her frankly that life without Aïda holds no charm for him whatsoever; and Amneris, foiled, completely loses her temper in the face of his melodious scorn. But when the priests appear on the way to the courtroom, her better nature asserts itself, and she covers her face from the sight of her lover's accusers. The chant of the priests from below only adds to her agony, and she recoils visibly as Rhadames is led away, and then listens breathlessly to the proceedings. She hears Ramfis' voice accusing at length, the priests shrieking "Traitor!" at every opportunity, and then the doom, three times repeated, each time rising a half-tone in its emphasis. *Buried alive!* This horrible sentence sends Amneris into hysterics, and as the priests come up, on their way home, she with the usual feminine inconsistency, upbraids them for their inhumanity.

"You know that he is a traitor!" they reply stolidly, as she stalks out.

The next and final scene is literally in two layers. At first glance it appears to be a movie screen before the operator has achieved the correct focus, but it will soon be recognized as the Temple of Ptah (upper layer) and its cellar vaults below. Upstairs the most elaborate ceremonies are in progress. Ptah himself, a huge and appalling statue, sits indifferently sniffing incense, while all his servants, male and female, sing and dance for

his pleasure. The words of their chant plainly declare the god to be immense, and he certainly is.

We recognize Amneris among the sycophants, evidently trying prayer as a last desperate propitiation, for underneath her feet in the cold, cold vault her belovèd Rhadames has been shut up to die.

We can see him dimly groping about in the shadows. But he is not alone. Even as he lifts up his voice to mourn his lost Aïda, she appears before him in the flesh, having slyly crept into the cellar when she heard the fate that had been selected for her lover.

It would seem on close examination that they might be more or less comfortable and happy there together for a few hours at least, but emotion or something equally deadly seems to sap their strength, for after singing the most heavenly and ravishing duet of good-by, they collapse in each other's arms.

ANDRÉ CHÉNIER

By UMBERTO GIORDANO

First Produced in Milan, 1896

"ANDRÉ CHÉNIER" is just important enough to hold a place in any compendium of popular operas, but were the qualification "great" also applied he would have to bow and withdraw as gracefully as possible. Nevertheless, the four acts concerned with this truly historical gentleman's loves, hatreds and tragic demise, are picturesque, colorful and not without excitement, especially for those whose enthusiasm is the French Revolution. As for the music, it is more interesting than that of any of the composer's other works, to which fact is probably due its place in the annual répertoire of the great opera companies. It may not stir you deeply, but neither will it bore you, and were it not damning with faint praise we might be tempted to use in description the word "adequate."

The curtain of ACT I rises to reveal the ballroom of the Château de Coigny, where preparations are under way for a party. It is the eleventh hour and the guests are imminent. Footmen rearrange various articles of furniture to suit the whims of an anxious Major-domo, and one lackey with a baritone voice addresses a blue sofa which he has just turned around, and is quite severe with it for the shameless flirtations which it has countenanced. His mood is a caustic one, and when his father approaches, also in livery, he transfers his attention and the burden of his song to the old man and the load of servile years which has bent his back. He is bitterly loquacious, this Gérard, but the entrance of the Countess, with her daughter Madeleine and her daughter's companion, Bersi, puts an end to his ravings. He is always self-conscious in the presence of Madeleine, for in spite of his humble estate, he has presumed to lift eyes of love in her direction.

The Countess, with aristocratic lack of manners, orders every one about, asks a few sharp questions, answers those of her daughter about the guests of honor for the evening, and then exits with sweeping train, advising Madeleine to lose no time in dressing

herself for the evening. We hear the girl's protestations against the stays and other tortures which beauty had to suffer in those *rococo* days, and so long does she protest that it is almost too late. The Countess returns and the first guests begin to arrive, so her daughter scampers off to put on some simple little white thing, with a rose in her hair.

The Major-domo now has a soul-satisfying time mouthing most of the great names of France, as the guests come in, but no name awakens such excitement as that of Monsieur, the "Little Abbé," whoever he may be. He is unquestionably the lion of the evening, and his two companions, Fléville the musician and Chénier the poet, shine in his reflected glory as well as in their own. The Abbé seems more interested in the cakes and marmalades which are pressed upon him than in the bevy of ladies hanging on his every word, but we suspect it is subterfuge and that he adores their homage. He gives them a little news from the Court. "The Third Estate" has been proclaimed, and the statue of Henri IV publicly insulted. What is the world coming to? Then he eats a good deal more jam, while his comrades take the floor. Fléville justifies his presence by a very acceptable and sentimental song, which sets the whole chorus singing, but Chénier is contrary and temperamental and refuses to invoke his muse to order.

Madeleine is piqued by his perverseness and wagers with her friends that she can make him "versify"—and on the subject of Love. Assuming an exaggerated air of unsophistication, she approaches him and begs demurely for just some simple little thing that a child like herself can understand. Chénier cannot resist her. He gallantly declares that her wishes are commands and obediently puckers up his forehead to think, whereat every one begins to roar with laughter. Naturally he is puzzled and very much pained when he hears the girl tell her mother that she has won the wager and openly mock his hesitation upon a theme found so facile by all her other swains. Inspired by a desire to recoup his dignity, Chénier plunges at once into a rhymed tirade against the rich, an impassioned exploitation of the wrongs of the poor. It is as sensational as it is ill-timed. It is not a popular subject just then, and the guests are indignant. Chénier would probably do well to make his adieux then and there, but for a strange interruption. Just as the Countess, making what apology she can for this outbreak, is marshaling the young people toward the center of the dancing floor, a disturbance is heard at the door, and Gérard enters at the head of a motley crowd of beggars who stretch out their hands and insist that they are starving. The Countess is

really hurt. How could Gérard permit, and even encourage, such a demonstration, when he knows well that she makes a regular round of charitable visits each week, even having the consideration to wear her plainest clothes out of regard for the paupers' feelings! The Major-domo and other footmen make the stay of the invaders brief indeed, and the hostess, with admirable *sang-froid*, goes right on with her arrangements for the gavotte, as the curtain falls.

Some time is supposed to elapse before the rise of the curtain on ACT II, for now it is 1794 and the Terror is at its bloody height. The scene shows us the terrace of the Café Hottot, on a Paris corner near the famous *Cours la Reine*. Chénier sits morosely at a table, while two of his comrades arrange and dust a little altar that has been built to the glory of the popular idol, Marat. Soon we discover at another table our little friend, Bersi, being entertained by The Spy, or secret agent of the Revolution. She is coy and unsuspicious, but we suspect an ulterior motive in his attentions. The fact is that she is under observation because she carries notes from her *aristo* mistress to some unknown lover, and Gérard, now grown famous and powerful in the service of the new Republic, harbors, as we know, an affection for Madeleine himself. Therefore it follows that this lover must be found and removed. The Spy is hot on the trail, as he informs us in an "aside."

Chénier is already "suspect," for he has made a few careless remarks about Robespierre within some one's hearing. He has a friend, however, one Roucher, who now hastens to him, very breathless and anxious, pushing a paper across the table and urging him to depart from hence without a moment's delay. Chénier thinks that this would be weak and cowardly behavior, and tells his friend that he is a fatalist, and that he cannot be hurt even in Paris until his moment comes. Besides, he has a stronger reason for wishing to linger a bit. The fact is that a mysterious lady has been sending him the most sentimental and fond epistles almost daily for some time, and until he discovers their author he cannot tear himself away. Roucher, true Frenchman as he is, cannot fail to see the force of this argument, and sniffs curiously at the sample letter which the poet offers for his inspection. He is sure it comes from very high up the social ladder, and offers to point out the writer among those ladies who, to thrill their jaded palates, make a habit of frequenting just such places as the Café Hottot. Chénier will soon see that she is as painted, false and

frivolous as all of her class. Will her eyelashes be blackened, her hair crimped? Most assuredly. Well, then let him have the passport, rather than disillusionment!

The impetuous young man jumps up to be off, but his way is blocked by a surging crowd. The little god of the Republic is making a progress through the streets. . . . Robespierre, no less! We see him, and Danton and Tallien, St. Just, David, Foucher. There is hardly a character from these pages of history that does not defile before our amused eyes which frantically struggle to discover some basis of recognition. Finally comes Gérard, who pauses to enhance the plot. He observes with satisfaction that The Spy is on the job, and assists him with a detailed description of the lady in the case. The Spy knows the very "party," and assures his master that she is due at this spot within the hour.

Chénier, growing uneasy by the minute, wishes to go, but Roucher finds the place interesting for a while longer, because Bersi has whispered that Chénier must be kept here at all costs. The sly girl still plays her game with The Spy, and follows him into the café, but not without a knowing wink to the two men. Now the stage fills with a chorus of women. They are a gay, unprincipled lot, the froth tossed up by the revolutionary storm. They pass noisily into the café, and Chénier once more tries to escape. This time he is fairly caught by Bersi, who has managed to sneak out and present him with the latest instalment of the anonymous love-letters. She bears startling news as well. The writer, "Speranza," will reveal her identity tonight! Hugely enjoying the mystery, the girl goes off, but the men are suspicious, it may be a trap. They depart in search of their swords.

Almost immediately Madeleine enters timidly, and when Chénier returns, greets him by quoting a line of his imprudent poem recited at her famous party. André recognizes her, can scarcely believe his luck, for in spite of her mocking and frivolous behavior on that occasion, he has never ceased to cherish the memory of her beauty. She explains her letters with some difficulty and embarrassment. It appears that when Chénier was in power, her thoughts turned on him as a possible protector, but that when he fell, she found that her feeling for him had developed into something more personal. She is now quite alone except for Bersi, her beautiful gilded château burned, and her family exterminated. She needs a friend. André waits to hear no more. He applies without delay for the position she offers. Rapturously they sing of their mutual satisfaction, and are about to leave for safer parts unknown, when their way is blocked by Gérard. He calls

the proud *aristo* by name, and taking a most inconsiderate advantage of his present powerful position, attempts to seize her about the waist. A scuffle ensues in which Chénier springs to the defense. Madeleine is carried off in safety by Roucher, while the poet and the ex-lackey cross swords.

"It is too easy!" complains André, nonchalantly running his opponent through.

"I am wounded!" groans the victim.

"Your own fault!" replies the victor. Something in his brusqueness recalls another occasion to Gérard. He recognizes Chénier, and as he has never quite got over the effects of his early training, he once more serves this guest of his *ci-devant* mistress.

"For Heaven's sake, escape; you are on Fouquier-Tinville's Death List!" André does so without delay and as indignant crowds surround their bleeding hero, the curtain falls.

In ACT III we have the famous Court of the Revolutionary Tribunal with the *Sans-Culottes* and the *Tricotteuses* in picturesque evidence. One Matthieu is haranguing the gathering and pleading for contributions for the really very heavy expenses of so much guillotining. His words make small impression, but when the popular Gérard enters, still showing the effects of his wound, and takes the platform, the whole mob rises and eagerly pours its money and trinkets into the urn. One pitiful old woman comes up to give her youngest son, all that she has left on earth. The boy is accepted as a recruit, the old woman goes tearfully out, and the crowds, before resuming their seats, dance and sing the "*Carmagnole*," without which no dramatic representation of the Terror would be complete.

The Spy now enters and informs his employer that "the bird is in the snare." In other words, André Chénier has been arrested and the lady is bound to seek him out. To confirm his statement, newsboys run through shrieking their headlines, "*Arrest. . . . Chénier!*"

Gérard pauses to argue with The Spy. Certainly, in this way he probably can get possession of the lady, but not of her heart, so what use is it? The Spy makes a sinister suggestion that men without heads are not very dangerous rivals. Gérard looks over the indictment. He cannot understand his own hesitation. He reads on. "Chénier, a soldier and a traitor!" This should be easy enough to sign, and yet he cannot bring himself to do it. Seizing the occasion to moralize upon what he thought the Revolution would bring about, and what it has really degenerated into,

he has a long solo which only the audience listens to. It bores The Spy, who goes off in search of further wickedness.

Now suddenly a very meek and wan Madeleine enters timidly and asks for Monsieur Gérard. She approaches him humbly. He can scarcely realize that this suppliant, shabby creature is the imperious young mistress who was once accustomed to looking right through him without seeing him, when he brought her a glass of wine. Beauty in distress, however, is beauty most appealing. When she offers herself to him as the price of her lover's life Gérard of the soft heart cannot stand the strain. He listens, almost tearful with sympathy, as she describes how, after all the terrible disasters to her house and estate, Love came along and made her far happier than she had ever been in the midst of riches. He sadly regards the paper before him, and tells her he could not save the man, even if he would. The crowds are heard clamoring outside, and their noisy steps on the stairs. Madeleine grows desperate. "You *must* save him!" she cries pitifully, and Gérard, certainly a magnanimous man, says that he will do his best.

The mob now rushes in, more objectionable than ever, babbling of what terrors they have seen and their greedy appetite for more. They scuffle and fight for places. Then come the jury and the judges. Gérard explains them all to Madeleine, who almost faints when André enters among the accused.

So the trial proceeds, names are read, accusations made, half listened to, recorded, all with the historical disregard either of witness, or counsel for the defense. At last Chénier is brought out. Seditious writings and disloyal propaganda are his crimes. Fouquier-Tinville smacks his lips. The man is foredoomed. But André manages somehow to snatch a rare privilege, and makes a melodious and patriotic speech, lasting much longer than was ever heard of in a Revolutionary Tribunal.

All this time Gérard has been growing more and more agitated. His heart is so softened by sentiment and patriotism that it incommodes him to the extent of a desperate measure. He leaps up and claims the charges against Chénier to be made by him—and false.

"What of that?" says Fouquier-Tinville. "I also make them, and they are true."

Gérard imprudently goes on talking. We have a feeling that he himself will shortly make the acquaintance of Madame Guillotine, if he doesn't keep still. But he has no effect on any one but Chénier, whom he has reduced to tears. The Jury now file out and file right in again. It is the shortest deliberation on record.

"Guilty! Death! . . ." Naturally, what else did they ever say in those days?

So Madeleine and her lover behold each other, only to be torn apart. Of course, she swoons, as the curtain falls.

ACT IV. The interior of the prison of St. Lazare is revealed by the rising curtain. André Chénier is seated at a rough little table writing by the light of a candle, while beside him stands his good friend Roucher. A jailer with the incongruous name of Schmidt remarks that it is getting a trifle late for visitors, but Roucher bribes him and André goes on furiously scribbling. He is inditing his swan-song to the world, and is induced to read the lines aloud to his admiring friend, who is much affected. The poem has said everything there is to say. The two men embrace and Roucher tears himself away. Hardly has he gone than there are other visitors. Gérard, to the respectful astonishment of the jailer, enters leading Madeleine by the hand. They have come on a startling errand. All hope of saving André being despaired of, Madeleine has decided that death with him would be far preferable to life without him, and has induced Gérard to use his influence to bring about this end. A certain extremely lucky young woman named Legray, who was to have perished the next morning, is to be liberated, and Madeleine takes her place in the tumbril. Gérard gives the order, and Madeleine helps matters along with all her remaining money and jewels. Schmidt is perfectly amenable. All this noble love and sacrificial devotion have reduced Gérard to a deplorable state of vicarious suffering. He can stay to see no more and rushes off to have one more try at the stony heart of Robespierre.

At last the lovers meet and immediately plunge into a duet of purest rapture over their imminent fate. It is a little difficult to understand how, even in the throes of such a passionate affair, guillotining can seem a desirable consummation, but these two seem to think it is, and sing of their eagerness for the dawn and the knife of death with the most admirable nerve. They are still fervidly embracing when the prison guard comes in, and the roll of the condemned is read.

"André Chénier!"

"Me voici!"

"Idia Legray!"

"C'est moi!"

Climbing into the death cart, they go off quite contentedly as the curtain falls.

THE BARBER OF SEVILLE

By GIOACHIMO ANTONIO ROSSINI

First Produced in Rome, 1816

THIS opera, although not very long, is so full of incident, plot and counterplot, that should this outline attempt to follow all the ins and outs of the action, all the amusing twists in the conversation, the mind of the gentle reader would be more confused than enlightened, and he would feel small urge to attend a performance. So, simplifying as much as possible, the story will be told, with the incidental advice that if you do not know exactly what they are chattering about every moment, do not bother, it is just effervescence of drollery and mischievous intrigue; and the whimsical comments and witty discourse of the orchestra will prove in itself an utter delight.

The original overture of the opera was lost, so Rossini, being an extremely lazy young man, never troubled to compose another, but used one he had on hand, which had previously done duty for two other operas; a conveniently adaptable composition, to be sure, and what a far cry from the Wagner idea, when the *Vorspiel* epitomizes all that is to follow.

The scene is laid in Seville, in the seventeenth century, and the same group of characters are used that Mozart had previously immortalized in the *Marriage of Figaro*, although at an earlier moment in their history. The curtain rises on a street in Seville, showing the house of Dr. Bartolo, on the right. Fiorello, servant of the Count of Almaviva, enters with a band of musicians whom he instructs to be very well-behaved. In a moment the Count enters and we see that a serenade is about to take place. Standing beneath the balcony of the house, the Count, to the accompaniment of the hired musicians, sings a sentimental greeting to the morning and to love. This song was also borrowed casually from the same source as the overture. The musicians disposed of, the Count moons about under the balcony, hoping for a glimpse of the

lady who usually rises early to take the morning air, but there is no sign of life. Presently a sound of merry singing is heard and the Count prudently hides as the amiable Figaro, barber-in-chief of the town, struts in. He is a very important person, a *factotum* indeed, as he proceeds to explain in his famous "*Largo*," a patter song which tickles our risibles and never fails to "bring down the house," whether opera or concert hall. Not only does he shave and bleed the populace, but he is a famous intriguer, a go-between in affairs of the heart. He is happy, popular, gay and rich enough! It is Figaro here—Figaro there—up and down the town all day! Delightful! The Count now steps from his hiding-place and suggests that the Barber may be able to do a little business for him. He exhibits a fat purse, and explains that he is hopelessly enamored of the beautiful ward of the unpleasant old Dr. Bartolo. Figaro is enthusiastic, this is just the sort of job he likes—leave it to him!

The window on the little iron balcony now opens and Rosina, our heroine, steps daintily out and peers below. She is holding a letter with intention to drop it to eager hands, but Dr. Bartolo, smelling a mouse, is at her elbow. She gayly tells him the paper is a bit of music she is learning from the opera, *Useless Precautions*, and when he would snatch it from her, lets it fall into the street. The anxious guardian runs off to gather it up, but during his brief disappearance within the house, Rosina cautions her suitor to hurry—the note is meant for him. So when the puffing Bartolo appears, naturally there is no paper, so, raging and blustering, he orders Rosina's immediate retirement, and goes "to chastise her."

The Count and Figaro now emerge, reading the letter, a *billet-doux* indeed, for Rosina is a forward minx, and quite ready to reciprocate all the Count's attentions, although they have never been introduced. She is treated like a prisoner by her old guardian, who is arranging to attach her fat dowry by marrying her himself. Any little plan to frustrate this that the handsome stranger can devise will receive her enthusiastic coöperation. As the two men talk together, the old doctor comes out and goes absent-mindedly down the street, after giving orders at the gate that no one but a certain Don Basilio shall be admitted.

Almaviva and the Barber now take council together, and the noble grandee decides that he will pursue his courtship *incognito*, so that he may be loved for himself alone, and decides on the name of Lindoro. Of course, her guardian gone, Rosina is again peeping from the window, so the assiduous Barber pushes his

guitar into the Count's hands and prompts him in another little serenade. But soon his salutations fall on empty ears, for some one inside has caused Rosina's speedy withdrawal.

"This is not getting on very fast," complains the impatient lover; and Figaro, his wits sharpened by the sight of more doubloons, devises a plan by which the Count, alias Lindoro, shall further disguise himself as a drunken soldier of a regiment arriving in town that night, and through his friend, the Colonel, obtain a billet at the doctor's. If he is consistently drunk, the old ogre will never bother to watch him, and he will have a thousand opportunities to press his affair. Almaviva is charmed with the scheme, pats the clever Barber on the back and inquires his address, and noting the location of the shop, goes off singing lightly heartedly of the really great pleasures of love.

When they are gone, old Fiorello slinks in. He is tired of waiting for his master, and feels that he has had a shabby deal all around. He slouches home as the curtain falls.

The next scene is sometimes given as a separate act, but in the score is written as part of Act I.

It is the drawing-room of Bartolo's house later that morning. Rosina, with a letter in her hand, enters and begins at once her famous cavatina, her *tour de force* of the whole score, "*Una voce poco fa!*" She has fallen in love with Signor Lindoro's charming voice, but it is a dangerous secret. No one shall suspect until she has him securely tied. She will be outwardly docile and meek at home, if things go her way, but if they don't no one is capable of more trickery than she! This aria, originally written for a contralto, has been shifted like the rest of the rôle into a high soprano key, and has been ornamented and embellished with many musical furbelows to display the sky-rocketings of famous voices. There is a tale that Rossini himself did not recognize it when sung to him one day by Patti at her apartment in Paris, so numerous were the added variations. At any rate, embellished or not, it is a very charming bit, merry and rippling as the clever girl's own thoughts.

In answer to her need for a discreet messenger, Figaro enters to shave the worthy doctor, but incidentally to deliver a message or two to the young lady. Caught in the act of imparting these by the entrance of the irritable Bartolo, he hides and allows the doctor to fume and fret over his tardiness. Rosina admits she has seen the delinquent Barber and, talking with him, found him delightful—but where he is now, is none of her concern! So

out she goes. Saucy, insolent though she be, Bartolo thinks her the more adorable; however, he *must* find the Barber! His two servants, called in, reply to his questions with a yawn and a sneeze. Poor man—his ill-humor seems rather justifiable. Now Don Basilio enters. He is really a repulsive old creature, dressed in the *soutâne* and shovel hat of a cleric and with a very long red nose. His vocation is that of a singing teacher, and his sideline, confidant and conspirator with Bartolo, who welcomes him profusely, for he needs advice. He thinks that if he is going to marry Rosina, the sooner the better, and he has decided on tomorrow.

"Very good," says the Don, "but here is a bit of news; take it for what it is worth. The Count of Almaviva has been seen in front of this place several times recently. He would be a formidable rival!"

Bartolo is distressed, and the ingenious Don then asks him if he has ever given any consideration to the power of *calumny*. It is a wonderful thing, and in a specific instance might be used to put the Count in a bad light, and out of Rosina's affections. His song, "*La Calumnia*," is an amusing and clever composition, as sharp and witty in music as in words. On its conclusion the two withdraw to make their arrangements, and Figaro comes out of hiding, to tell the entering Rosina of the plot on foot. Rosina shrugs her shoulders; anything those two old things can concoct does not alarm her; what absorbs her attention now is the gentleman who was with Figaro this morning—Figaro must tell her all about him! So she hears from the crafty fellow that the Count is "Lindoro," Figaro's cousin, just from the country. He has a sweetheart? Yes (with an eye on Rosina)—one with black hair, red cheeks, soft hands. And her name? R-O-S-I-N-A. Together they begin a gay duet of ways and means to bring about a meeting. Figaro suggests another letter, but the efficient girl has one already written in her pocket. The Barber recognizes her as his peer in intrigue and takes his leave while she sings on.

Now the grouchy guardian returns, demanding what on earth the Barber was doing here and of what they talked. She answers every question, but with an eye to the traps he lays. He cannot catch her in any way; she has a rational explanation for everything, and he has to acknowledge himself worsted, but not before they have both thoroughly lost their tempers, and the old man goes off nursing his much-injured dignity.

Berta, the maid, now comes on the empty stage, in reply to a knocking, and with much trepidation admits a roistering, shabby

soldier, who reels about, noisily demanding hospitality. It is, of course, the Count in his latest disguise. When the master of the house enters to ask the cause of all the hubbub, the Count teases him by mispronunciation of his name and announces that he has been quartered upon him. Incredible! He is exempt from billeting! Both then produce their papers and while the agitated doctor is searching the desk for his, the Count snatches a few words with Rosina, who has also arrived by this time. When the doctor turns around he orders her off to her room, but she has no intention of obeying, and stays around to see the fun.

From now on all is in the greatest confusion; it is quite useless to follow all the details, and much better to enjoy the whole brilliant and amazing effect. Somehow a note is exchanged between the lovers at the same time that the soldier openly insults the doctor and strikes his paper from his hand. Some one calls for the police, the servants enter wildly. The foolish old singing teacher adds nothing to the *mêlée* but his eternal, "*Do, re, mi, fa, sol!*" Even Figaro comes in to increase the confusion of action and voices and finally the officers arrive to arrest the brawling soldier. Rosina, a little frightened, tries to win his pardon, but a few whispered words as to his identity do the trick and the police carry off, not the Count, but the blustering, explaining, indignant doctor, to the vast entertainment of all the spectators, as the curtain falls.

ACT II or III, according to practice, takes place in the same room. Evidently poor Dr. Bartolo's explanations were satisfactory at police headquarters, for we now find him home again, though still somewhat nettled. He has been doing some sleuth work himself and believes that the drunken soldier was an agent of the Count Almaviva. A knocking now occurs and immediately there enters the Count in still another disguise. This time he is Don Alonzo, an assistant music teacher, sent in Don Basilio's place, because of his illness, he explains, after saluting the household with much farcical unction. Bartolo, a little ruffled by all these unexpected entrances and exits to which his premises are becoming subject, looks the fellow over carefully, but fails to recognize him, so thanks him for his good wishes, and says he will go at once to visit his sick friend. But this naturally does not suit the Count's plans, so he resorts to an involved bit of trickery. He, with much show of mystery, explains that he found a note penned by Rosina in the lodging of the Count Almaviva, and that if he is allowed to see the young lady, he can easily

induce her to believe that the note was discovered in the possession of a mistress, and that Rosina's new lover is faithless. Bartolo, recognizing the hall-mark of Don Basilio's school of calumny, is enchanted, and goes to call the girl, while the Count, in an aside to the audience, in case we are *slightly confused*, explains that this was a fabrication for the sole purpose of securing an interview with Rosina.

So she comes back with her guardian, and unable to suppress a cry of recognition, is compelled once more to use her wits and invent a strained ankle. She is told that Don Basilio's substitute will now give her a singing lesson, and the doctor trying to be facetious suggests that she sing something from *Useless Precautions*. What she really sings makes very little difference, as the stage directions permit the prima donna to interpolate whatever her fancy dictates. This singular circumstance is again explained by the composer's indolence. The trio he wrote for the scene being lost with the overture, he hit upon this expedient to save himself further effort. So the famous Lesson Scene is the singer's chance in a million to sing whatever shows her voice off to best advantage, without regard to the restraints of dramatic unity. There is usually a *bravura aria*, followed by an encore, and then as a *bonne bouche* she will probably add one of the old favorites, like "The Last Rose of Summer," or "Home, Sweet Home," sung to her own accompaniment. The audience which has been waiting eagerly for this famous scene, never fails to applaud to the echo this diverting interlude, but the "Lesson" with a pupil who could obviously make her fortune teaching, comes to an end eventually, and the scene proceeds.

The Count has taken advantage of his position at the piano to exchange a few words with Rosina, who bitterly bewails her own unenviable state and implores his aid. Bartolo, among all the auditors, has been unimpressed by his ward's performance: music was music in his day—not all this fol-de-rol! He will sing them an example of real music, which he does, in a pseudo-classic, quaint, and conventional ballad, the irony of which should not be lost on the intelligent listener. But Bartolo's vocal efforts are not pleasing, and laughter is his only applause. This is primarily instigated by Figaro, who now appears ready at last to shave him. Soap and towels are necessary, but the doctor hesitates whether to fetch them himself or give the fellow his keys. Finally he decides for the latter, and Figaro is secretly delighted, for he knows that the key to the side gate is also upon the chain, and

he might find it useful. Figaro is also bent on giving the Count his desired *tête-à-tête* with his lady, so presently we hear a tremendous crash of falling crockery, and the harassed doctor runs out, leaving the two unchaperoned, just long enough to exchange their vows of love, with object matrimony. All too soon the Barber and his client return, and the shaving proceeds with ludicrous detail, Figaro exhibiting the purloined key to the lovers.

And now to every one's consternation, the supposedly indisposed Don Basilio enters, quite unconscious of the panic he creates. The doctor expresses amazement at this quick recovery, and the Don, not knowing to what he alludes, thinks his poor friend mad. But Figaro, cleverly taking advantage of a human failing we all know, shows great concern over Don Basilio's appearance, and really succeeds in making the poor wretch think himself ill. However, it must be admitted that a purse slipped into his hand by the Count influences his admission. Before he knows just how it happens he is persuaded to retire to a rollicking salute of repeated "*Buona sera's*" from the Count and Rosina.

Once more the shaving advances, with Figaro using himself as a screen to shield the lovers from the doctor's eye, while the orchestra chuckles and laughs to itself over the whole absurd affair. When the doctor tries to look at his ward, Figaro invents soap in his eye and howls with distracting commotion, and the lovers manage somehow to make their arrangements for an elopement that night. Bartolo, never missing a trick in spite of obstacles, finally makes a furious rush in their direction, but they all accomplish their laughing escape, leaving the doctor savagely calling for his servants and instructing them to bar all the doors. Then like many employers, having given his orders, he proceeds to carry them out himself, and with the inevitable result of a dissatisfied menial considering "giving notice."

Don Basilio, recovered completely by now, returns with his friend the doctor, who is so upset that he has decided to marry his ward this very night before anything more can happen. Basilio counsels delay, for the Notary is engaged anyway to-night to marry Figaro's niece to some one. Immediately Bartolo feels suspicious: he knows Figaro hasn't a relative in the world; Basilio had better go after the Notary at once. So he goes and Bartolo, left alone, takes the letter given him by the spurious Don Alonzo from his pocket and calls for Rosina. Her nerves, too, are somewhat on edge. He convinces her without much trouble of her lover's duplicity and in a rage she vows that she will marry her

guardian rather than such a traitor, and tells him of her previous plan to elope. In great excitement he sends her to her room and goes off for assistance.

While the stage is empty, the orchestra depicts an approaching storm with great vividness and vigor. Just as it relents a little, Figaro and the Count, having let themselves in with the stolen key, enter from the balcony. As they are fumbling about for a light, Rosina comes in and begins forthwith to berate the Count for all his supposed delinquencies. However, he soon wrings an admission from her that she did love *Lindoro* deeply, and in a few minutes makes explanations which more than reconcile her, for at last he betrays his real identity and Rosina is perfectly enchanted at the idea of betrothal to a Grandee. They begin to whisper excitedly, "*Zitti, zitti,*" and try to escape at once by the window, but some rogue has removed their ladder. In the midst of their distress, Basilio comes in with the Notary in tow and Figaro, never at a loss, explains to the Notary that these are the principals in the marriage of his niece and that as they are all met here so opportunely, they might as well get the thing over at once. Basilio, opening his mouth to protest, is silenced by a pressure of the Count's pistol against his ribs. So the deed is done, and Dr. Bartolo, returning with a patrol at his heels, finds himself a host at a wedding. This is too much! Beside himself, he shrieks for the arrest of all the parties concerned, but at the Count's revelation of his exalted estate, the police back out apologetically. In a delightful *finale* the doctor decides to accept the situation philosophically. After all a Grandee for a connection is not without its advantages! The Count promises happiness for all, especially for his blushing bride, and Figaro and Don Basilio escape with a reproach or two, excusing some of their behavior by the chink of gold in their pockets. As the lantern kept lighted outside the window during the late troublous time is now extinguished as no longer needed, the curtain falls to a jubilant orchestral review of some of the amusing incidents.

LA BOHÈME

By GIACOMO PUCCINI

First sung in Turin, 1896

THIS is the old story of the beautiful consumptive of no particular morals; but so charmingly dressed is it in all the gay local color of the old Paris Latin Quarter, the naïve and careless and merry existence of the original Villagers, that we sit enthralled as before something always new. The music puts no very great strain upon our ears or our emotions. It plays, it sings, it weeps, melodiously, satisfactorily, understandably. An evening at *Bohème* is a staple article of relaxing enjoyment.

As for the singers, they always have a beautiful time. The artist who does Marcel may be sixty, Rudolph fat and the father of a family, Schaunard and Colline honorable pillars of the opera house, but for this evening they are boys again, perhaps reliving the precarious but carefree days of their early struggles—at any rate, through Puccini's magic, translating themselves and their hearers into the glowing exuberant morning of life.

The rising curtain reveals a typical attic studio, furnished principally with a skylight, empty bottles, packs of cards, a rickety bed, and the sparsest of chairs and tables. There is a stove but no fire, and it is Christmas Eve. Before the easel sits Marcel, the baritone, painting an atrocity which he calls "The Passage of the Red Sea." It is a chilly sea indeed, and he has to blow upon his numbed fingers from time to time.

Rudolph, for lack of a fire of his own, is taking dreary consolation in watching through the skylight the chimney pots smoking from the fires of others. The two young men tell each other as a great secret that they are none too warm. Rudolph repudiates the idea of "the sweat of one's brow"—it doesn't work. Marcel says his hands are as cold as the icy heart of Musetta, his late and faithless mistress. Talk, however, is not warming. Perhaps another chair might be sacrificed for firewood. But Rudolph has a better idea: he will let *Genius* warm them for a bit.

"My Red Sea?" inquires Marcel anxiously.

"No; too smelly!" objects Rudolph. "My play."

He drags a bulky dog-eared manuscript from the table drawer. ACT I is soon blazing merrily on the cold hearth. They sit down before it to warm themselves, as Colline, the philosopher, comes in, stamping his numbed feet and flinging a bundle of books on the table.

"Not a pawn shop open on Christmas Eve!" he complains; then seeing the fire he exclaims in wonder.

"Ah, yes, my play," says Rudolph ruefully.

"A very brilliant one!" Colline concedes, but adds as the blaze dies, "Its phrases are too brief—the *entr'actes* too long!"

So ACT II and ACT III follow the first, and the young men laugh and joke light-heartedly while they are burned to embers.

Suddenly the door at the back opens and two errand-boys stagger in with baskets of provisions. The men can scarcely believe their eyes, but far be it from them to question whence it comes. They fall upon the food—they pile the fuel into the stove—they are ecstatic over the contents of the basket; even wine and cigars are revealed! The errand-boys leave, and Schaunard, the musician, like a victorious general enters, tossing some coins into the air. The others snatch at them like hungry crows—yes, he has earned enough and to spare for to-morrow's needs. He is anxious, in spite of their interruptions, to tell the tale of his luck, and it is fantastic enough to amuse them, surely. He was engaged by an English *milord* to play in a room until the parrot died. This was easily accomplished. Schaunard choked the parrot with a piece of parsley.

Suddenly he realizes that the others are setting the table and remonstrates with them. Surely the food can wait until to-morrow—who dines at home on Christmas Eve?

"Come on! We'll go forth and enjoy life and the ladies!"

Just a drink or two beforehand! They bring out the bottles and lock the door, but are interrupted by a knock. It is old Benoit, in slippers and gown, who has heard sounds of revelry and promptly comes for his rent. He smiles ingratiatingly and his irresponsible tenants welcome him with mock politeness. They offer him wine and succeed in getting him slightly bemused. Marcel insists that he saw the old gentleman flirting one evening at Mabile; and Benoit, with many pleased chuckles, admits the impeachment. They twit him and tease him and cry shame upon him as an old married man. They surround him and bewilder him and hustle him to the door and out before he is able to remember just why he came.

Marcel again locks the door and announces that thus the quarter's rent is paid. So they divide the money Schaunard has brought and make ready to go out and enjoy themselves. They advise Colline to spend one of his coins on a shave. Laughing and talking, they go off. Rudolph has to finish an article before he can go, and they will wait for him downstairs in the porter's lodge. They rattle down the stairs, cursing the darkness, shouting and stumbling.

At last it is quiet and Rudolph must do a little concentrating. He draws up a chair and thriftily blowing out all the candles but one, sits down to write. He is fated not to finish his work this night, however. Scarcely has he put pen to paper than a timid little knock is heard upon the door. It is Mimi, embarrassed, asking pardon, but needing a light. Her candle has blown out. Rudolph, opening the door, sees a pretty little creature and promptly asks her in. She comes, gladly, as it is now a bit warm in the studio. She is bewildered, timid, clutching her candle and her key, but she is also deeply sensible of the presence of an attractive male. She coughs a little, then suddenly faints, and her key and candlestick fall to the floor. Rudolph, all admiration and concern, restores her with water and a drink of wine. Recovering, she decides that she had better go, and Rudolph, very loath, accompanies her to the door with a candle, but the wind blows both the lights out again. Mimi remembers her key. Groping for it, their hands touch. It is enough for Rudolph. When he finds the key he puts it in his pocket. More groping and he has firm hold of her hand this time. She does not resist. The attic is flooded with moonlight and the two are young and passionate. It is Christmas Eve, and work and duty are forgotten. The touch of the cold little fingers inflames Rudolph and he bursts into a melodious expression of his sentimental concern. Manlike, he wishes to tell her all about himself, which he does freely, in detail, in familiar, saccharine strains. At last he asks, as an after-thought, of her.

"Mimi, they call me, although I do not know why," she replies simply. She has so little to tell—lives in a garret with a potted rose for company, and all day her busy fingers embroider on silk and wool, flowers almost real, which she loves. She has no further ambitions. She is contented with her needle and her dreams.

Rudolph is enthralled with this little, delicate, clinging vine who has come to him out of the dark. To the impatient shouts of his companions, cooling their heels below, he replies that he has

three more lines to write, then quite frankly he adds, "Go along ahead and get a table at the Momus, and reserve two chairs for me. We are two!" The voices below laugh and sing, "So that is his poetry," as they go off.

Mimi, bending toward the street in a moonbeam, is really very lovely. The impressionable Rudolph is filled with emotions. He boldly seizes and kisses her, and the shy girl makes no demur. She may be a little recluse, but Mimi is no nun. Passionately they embrace, singing rapturously as they descend the stairs together. The room is cold and empty.

The curtain falls.

ACT II. The rising curtain shows a street corner in the Latin Quarter, with everything very gay and festive for Christmas Eve. All the tables, both inside and out at the Café Momus, are full, and crowds of holiday-makers surge back and forth upon the streets, inspecting the shops. Our gay friends, Marcel, Colline and Schaunard are there, the latter making a great fuss over a penny horn he is buying, Colline interested in the wares of the old-clothes man, and Marcel freely bartering his heart to the passing girls. Presently Rudolph appears with Mimi on his arm, intent upon the purchase of a bonnet in a millinery shop. All is uproar and light-hearted confusion in the streets. Hawkers cry every conceivable ware from canary birds to jujubes. Mothers lose and recover their children, students pursue *midinettes*. A gendarme insists good-naturedly that they keep moving, and gradually the crowd disperses, leaving only the guests at the Café still clamoring and the waiters scurrying.

Mimi, having purchased a very chic pink bonnet, Rudolph insists that they join their friends at dinner. Mimi, however, having had a taste of the vanities, lingers over a necklace in a window. Rudolph promises her one twice as fine when an ancient aunt of his passes away. He is jealous over Mimi's wandering eyes and drags her to the Café, where the others are gathering, among the last of the guests. They select a commodious table on the outside and sit down, apparently quite warm and comfortable, which seems odd considering their state of chill just now in the studio, but there may have been a sudden rise of the temperature or perhaps only the mercurial effect of good cheer.

Mimi is introduced to the admiring trio, but before we can catch more of their conversation the street venders intrude again, especially one Parpignol, the toy vender, who is followed like the Pied Piper by swarms of clamoring children. We bend our ear

toward the dinner table and overhear them ordering sausage, venison, turkey and sweets, and wine; then we and the entire company are diverted by the arrival of a young, pretty, overdressed young person who is recognized as Musetta, late beloved of Marcel. But she is not alone. She has in tow a doddering old gentleman of obvious wealth and extreme fussiness, Alcindoro, her latest victim, who gasps and sings of the dance she is leading him and of his expiring patience. Musetta, however, pays no attention to him and picks out a table to suit her where she can be easily seen by her former lover. She is peevish that Marcel refuses to catch her eye, and snappily orders Alcindoro to sit down, which he does with bad grace, turning up his collar, he of all the company seeming to feel the weather.

She is far from unobserved, however. Marcel is red and embarrassed and drinks a good deal; all the rest, except Rudolph and Mimi, who are self-absorbed, exchange shy looks and winks and poke fun at Musetta's fine clothes and ancient suitor. Musetta is beside herself, and finally throws a plate on the pavement, saying it smells of onions, but really to make Marcel look at her. The poor old gentleman is very much embarrassed and tries to soothe her, but she brushes him off like a buzzing fly. Finally even Mimi notices the disturbance. "Who is she?" she asks, and Marcel explains bitterly and tragically that the lady's first name is Musetta and her last, "Temptation"—that she is fickle and unworthy of any regard—that she stole his heart—that he needs sustenance,—“Pass the ragout!” They all laugh at Marcel and Mimi promises Rudolph that she will never behave thus—then like true Parisians they turn with absorption to their food. Musetta has, however, many tricks in her bag. Now she tries her *Waltz Song*. You all know it. The gay lilt of it is whistled and sung up and down the world.

The song precipitates an amusing scene—the irritation of poor old Alcindoro, the petulance of Musetta, the agony of Marcel, who fears to capitulate, the wonder and pity of Mimi, in the security of her own love affair. Musetta, feeling sure of her triumph, invents an excuse to rid herself of her elderly escort. Squealing with pain she complains that her shoe pinches and sends him off protesting, to have it fixed for her. When he is gone Musetta and Marcel salute each other to the vast entertainment of the others. But there is a sudden dampening of their spirits when the bill is presented. Not a *sou* among them! Schaudard's pocket has been picked! The stage fills with people gathering to

see a parade, but the confusion does not deter the waiter. "Who will pay?" he insists. Musetta has a brilliant idea. Why, of course, her elderly friend can pay, so the two bills are placed on his plate as a little surprise for the returning Alcindoro to find, and they all roar at the excellence of the joke and get up to join the crowds. Musetta, minus a slipper, can only hobble, so Marcel and Colline lift her to their shoulders and the whole little group goes off, to a march tune on Schaunard's penny pipe, Mimi waving her handkerchief like a banner. Just before the curtain falls, the long-suffering Alcindoro returns with the shoe, to find the table empty of all but the two huge bills. He drops into a chair in apoplectic dismay.

ACT III. To the foregoing scene of merriment and confusion, the somber pathos of ACT III is in striking contrast. It is dawn at the *Barrière d'Enfer*, the Hellgate of Paris, on a snowy February morning. On the left is a tavern of which the sign-board is Marcel's old masterpiece, "The Passage of the Red Sea," now converted to "The Port of Marseilles," and the door is flanked by painted figures of a Turk and a Zouave. At the rear is the toll-gate, beyond which sweepers are at work, obviously feeling the cold. Under the plane-trees at the right are some Customs Officials dozing around a little brazier. The snow falls in big thick paper flakes. People come and go about their humble business through the gate.

Inside the tavern is warmth and gayety, for one hears the clink of glasses and snatches of song, and Musetta's voice above them all. Very slowly the gray dawn lightens, but the snow falls prodigally. Poor Mimi, approaching under the trees, inadequately wrapped in a small shawl, has head and shoulders thickly powdered, and coughs as much as she dare, for she still has much to sing. She approaches a Sergeant timidly and asks if this is the tavern where a painter is working, and when he has told her and she has coughed a little more, she asks a passing maid to send Marcel to her. She cowers beside the tree-trunks, while pedestrians come and go. Finally Marcel comes out, irrepressible as ever, and greets her affectionately. He and Musetta have been here a month, he painting and she giving singing lessons. Behold his handiwork! He points to the painted sentries on the door. "But come in out of the snow!"

Mimi will not; she is too dispirited, too haggard. In a burst of confidence she implores Marcel to help her. Rudolph is act-

ing so strangely, so jealous, so cruel, she cannot tell what to do. "If you don't get along, better separate," suggests Marcel, helpfully.

"Yes," agrees Mimi, sadly. "Will you aid me?" And again she is shaken by a slight cough.

"I'll wake him and tell him. He is in there asleep!" says Marcel. "You watch through the window. But, my dear girl, what a cough!"

"Yes, poor Mimi coughs all the time now."

But here comes Rudolph himself. She hides behind a tree. Rudolph evidently has the same trouble on his mind. Seeing Marcel he plunges into his difficulties at once. He must get a separation from Mimi, she is driving him crazy, she flirts—she is faithless.

"Pooh!" says Marcel. "Perfect rot!"

"I suppose it is, really," confesses the illogical Rudolph. "I do love her madly, but she is ill." (Mimi, startled, creeps nearer.) "Yes, I'm afraid, you know, that she is dying with fever and coughing. I cannot give her what she should have!" At the word "dying" Mimi gives a little gasp and begins to cough and sob, so of course they discover her.

Rudolph, concerned that she has overheard him, tries to make her come inside, but she consistently believes in fresh air. Then suddenly Musetta's gay laugh is heard, and Marcel, running to the window, cries distractedly that she is flirting again, and rushes in to stop her. Mimi, now coughing more and more, tries to tear herself away from the none too insistent Rudolph. She will go back to the home she left at his bidding. She will come in soon to get her few little belongings, but he may have the pink bonnet for a souvenir. Rudolph is touched; he and Mimi sing of love and parting, rudely interrupted by a crash and a shriek. It is Musetta and Marcel, also bidding each other good-by in quite another vein.

"Toad!" screams Musetta.

"Viper! Witch!" he retorts.

"My love, my springtime rose!" sing Mimi and Rudolph blandly as the curtain falls.

The last scene takes us back to the students' attic of Act I. Rudolph is trying to write, Marcel to paint, but they are gossiping. Rudolph has seen Musetta riding in a fine carriage, dressed in velvet, and Marcel claims to have encountered Mimi in similar

state. Both pretend indifference and yet accuse each other of bleeding hearts. Work will heal the wounds—but work is difficult. Rudolph blames his pen, Marcel his brush, and kisses a knot of ribbons from his pocket, and Rudolph gets out the old pink bonnet to moon over. So they give up all pretense and sing sadly of their forlorn love affairs. But they are young. Their stomachs are as empty as their hearts. "Time for yesterday's dinner!" complains Marcel. "Ah—here we are!"

Colline and Schaunard enter with provisions, but it is no Christmas basket this time. A bag of rolls, one dried fish! The irrepressible creatures construct from it, however, an epicurean feast. They offer each other the most delicious dishes, they set the water bottle to cool in an old hat and quaff champagne, they rise from the feast, sated, to keep appointments with royalty, then delay to enjoy a dance. Rudolph sees in Marcel a gentle maiden whom he invites to step a measure, and is accepted. The fun waxes fast and furious. Colline fancies himself insulted, challenges Schaunard to a duel with poker and tongs in bloodthirsty manner. The confusion and laughter rises high. Suddenly the door opens and Musetta enters, breathless and pale. The men are stunned; Marcel almost faints.

But Musetta is serious. Mimi is outside, very ill—cannot even climb the stairs. In a moment the impetuous youths have dragged out the rickety old bed, poked up the pillows, brought in the poor little seamstress, and made her drink some wine. Against the pillows her face looks, or should look, wan and drawn (oh, why will the prima donna never sacrifice the rouge!), but she is grateful for their attentions. She smiles at the hovering, wretched Rudolph. "Let me stay here with you?" she whispers. "Forever!" sobs the penitent man.

Musetta and the others are talking. She tells them she heard of Mimi's plight: deserted, ill, and penniless. After a long search she found her, dying. "The poor child begged to be brought to die near Rudolph, and now, in less than an hour, she will be gone."

Mimi has responded to the wine and the warmth. She smiles at them all, and wishes she had her little muff to warm her hands. Even Rudolph's kisses fail. They frantically search the empty cupboard for provisions—Mimi coughs again—Musetta and Marcel are reunited in a common cause. She pulls off her earrings and gives them to him. "Go buy food and get a doctor." As an afterthought she decides to go too, and get the little muff

Mimi seems so eager for. Colline too has his contribution to make: his dear, faithful old friend, his overcoat, shall be sacrificed. In a touching burlesque he bids the garment a fond farewell and he and Schaunard also withdraw. Now little Mimi has her lover all to herself, and clasping her tenderly he sings to her memories of their happy days together and their first meeting in the dark, when she lost the key. An echo of his first wooing floats into the melody. In a flash of caprice the dying girl asks for her old bonnet and puts it on, smiling, only to be choked by coughing, and fall back fainting on the pillows. Rudolph's cries of distress bring the others on the run, with cordial, food, and a promise of a doctor's visit. Mimi revives at the touch of the soft little muff, and thinking it is Rudolph's present, gasps her happy thanks. With her cheek against its fur she tries to sleep, the others bustling about preparing the cordial and discussing her condition. Musetta offers a little prayer to the Virgin for her recovery.

Suddenly Schaunard looks over to the bed. "She is gone!" he whispers. A sunbeam has fallen across the girl's face. Rudolph tries to cover the window with Musetta's cloak. But too late. Noticing the sudden quiet, the strange behavior of the others, Rudolph runs to the bed. In her pink bonnet and her little muff, bolstered against the big pillows, Mimi is very still. She is dead. With a wild cry her young lover calls her name and flings himself upon her. Musetta, the tempestuous, bursts into loud sobs, while the painter, the philosopher, and the musician turn their backs and wipe their eyes.

The curtain falls,

BORIS GODOUNOV

By M. MOUSSORGSKY

First Given in Petrograd, 1874

THIS opera is unique in that it is almost devoid of plot and depends for its drama upon the chronology of certain events in the history of Russia in the beginning of the seventeenth century. The music of Moussorgsky is powerful, striking, full of color, intense, mysterious, stimulating and depressing by turns: a deeply national epitome of Russian characteristics as we suppose them; but there is to the average ear, attuned to the Italian and French operas, little of easy, pleasant melody in either concerted numbers or arias. Although the rôle of Boris is one of great dramatic force, especially as demonstrated to us by the art of that tremendous Russian, Chaliapin, the chorus is for once the real star of the performance. To it are intrusted many of the finest musical effects, and by it is established and maintained throughout, the extraordinary atmosphere which pervades the opera from the rise of the curtain. An evening spent at *Boris* is never to be avoided, it is an amazingly easy way in which to visit the very heart of old Russia.

ACT I begins in a public square in Moscow, in front of the Novodievitchi Convent. Many people (the chorus) are gathered there, discussing and bemoaning their rulerless state. A procession of the Boyars—or members of the Imperial Council—pass across the square, headed by Prince Shouisky, and the crowd, closing in after them, press about the convent door, curious as to events that are transpiring within. A pompous police official comes out to teach them manners, but they insolently push and shuffle, finally falling on their knees and beseeching their Czar, their “little Father,” not to remain permanently in the convent to which he has retired. All pray and moan and chant unhappily until again the Secretary of the Duma appears and commands silence and announces that the Czar has given his final answer. In spite of moral suasion and official pressure, Boris declines the throne. The

people must pray continuously that he may eventually be given wisdom. The people obediently resume their prayers, and pilgrims entering add their own chant as they industriously distribute *icons* among the people. The scene changes.

It is a cell in the Convent of Miracles. Pimenn, an old monk, is chronicling with painstaking effort the events of Russian history during his lifetime which, from his comments as he works, seem to be mostly of a disgraceful and tragic order. He thinks he has finished, pauses prayerfully, then recollects another crime, and jots it down, while the voices of his unseen brethren chant from another room. On Pimenn's hard bed in the background a young man who calls himself Gregory, but is also known as Grishka and will assume still a third name, as we shall soon see, has been sleeping profoundly, but now he awakens with a start and shudder. He grumbles that he has had the same unpleasant dream three times repeated, and marvels that old Pimenn is still so calmly copying on his parchment. It is almost dawn. The youth kneels before the old man and asks his blessing, which received, he proceeds to outline the disturbing dream. It seems that he stood on a high tower overlooking Moscow, so high indeed that the city looked like nothing but a huge ant-hill, but all the ants came out and jeered and pointed at him and so unnerved him that finally he fell from the tower and awoke terrified.

Pimenn is not greatly concerned over this—it would seem an ordinary enough nightmare—the cause is probably that Gregory lay down to sleep forgetting to say his prayers. He, Pimenn, when in the years of his own flaming youth, usually found this the simple explanation of his restless slumbers.

Gregory is glad that Pimenn mentioned his youth, for he loves to hear stories of those great and awful days when Ivan the Terrible was on the throne, and there was always some sort of splendid excitement going on. How different his own boyhood! Brought to the monastery while still a child he never had a chance to know the world at all. He would like to see a few battles, and also banquets. But Pimenn thinks it is a very good thing that he has missed them, the world is a precarious place, especially infested with women who charm away men's souls. He reminds the ardent youth that even one or two of the magnificent Czars, among them the Terrible Ivan himself, occasionally sought refuge in the cloister, and always gave it their protection and good-will. As for Feodor, Ivan's son, it is well-known that his rooms in the palace were furnished like monastic cells, and that he led the life of a recluse, with great benefit to Russia.



FEODOR CHALIAPIN AS BORIS GODOUNOV

During Pimenn's dissertation, Gregory has drawn nearer to the light, and now seats himself at the table. Following the monk's train of thought he has gone on a generation, and now with kindling eye, asks eagerly about the murdered Czarevitch, Feodor's younger brother and heir. How old was he when killed—what his appearance? Pimenn innocently enough replies, "Had he lived, he would be about your age and stature!" Mumbling on he does not notice the start the boy gives at these words. "Yes, yes," he continues, "that was a bloody and terrible crime that Czar Boris perpetrated to place himself on the throne. I had better put it in my memoirs at once, it will be a fitting climax."

The bell for Matins rings and the tired old man decides to leave further writing until evening. Telling Gregory that to him will be bequeathed the weary task of continuing the manuscript, and giving him his blessing, he goes slowly toward the chapel. The boy lingers a moment, singing of retribution, then follows him out as the curtain falls.

The third scene of the first act is brief but utterly magnificent, throbbing and glittering with the splendor and pomp and colorful pageantry of Russia in all her glory. It is the square between the two Cathedrals of the Assumption and Archangels, and every inch is crowded with kneeling, murmuring, excited people. Apparently Boris Godounov, the Czar, has changed his mind and decided to accede to the people's wishes and reign after all. As the great statesman committed one of the most brutal murders on record to gain this very end and place himself on the throne, we cannot help feeling that his reluctance of the first scene was more or less of a pose, calculated to whet their enthusiasm.

At any rate now he has what he wants, and should be a happy man. With acclamations and shouts the first of the procession is introduced, and in quick succession and increasing magnificence appear Soldiers, Guards, Pages, Strelzi Guards, the Secretary of the Duma, and all the Imperial Staff, more Strelzis and then the lordly Boyars, in single file and regal estate. They form in ranks and semicircles of expectation, trumpets blow, bells ring, the populace shouts and sings, incited thereto by Prince Shouisky and others, and finally the stage having been thus becomingly set for the great entrance, comes Boris, followed by his daughter Xenia and his little son. Instead of looking proud and pleased, he appears to be on the verge of a nervous collapse, muttering dark thoughts about his secret sin which evidently discommodes him day and night. However, he almost immediately pulls himself together, and with great dignity and fervor invokes the blessing of the

Saints upon his reign. With noble humility he bows in acknowledgment of Russia's great dead, evidently a part of the ceremonial; and finally in great majesty and with large gestures, invites all, from beggar to Boyar, to join him in feasting. We are inclined to suppose it to be a spiritual rather than a material banquet, for with a grandiose sweep he leads the way into the Cathedral. But it is only what the people expected, for they cry their well-rehearsed praises and glories until they bring down the curtain upon their emotional rejoicings.

ACT II takes place in the tap-room of an inn on the border of Lithuania. The innkeeper, a humble peasant woman, is mending an old shoe and singing to herself a quaint refrain about a duckling, whose personality is somewhat confused in her mind with that of her lover. Voices and laughter float in from behind the scenes, but she pays small attention until two shabby itinerant friars, Missail and Varlaam, appear outside the window, chanting their appeal for alms. Then the good woman in a panic remembers all her sins, and hastens to let the saintly men into the house. They go through the conventional motions of blessing and enter, followed by the young monk, Gregory, who is now dressed as a peasant and posing as Dimitri, the young brother of the late Czar. He flings himself wearily upon a stool, and the cheerful Varlaam tries to buck him up a bit; they are near the frontier, and probably will cross to-day, he says encouragingly—although for the life of him he cannot see why the youth is so keen to get to Lithuania. Merely escaping out of that gloomy cloister is enough for them, he and Missail are happy whether it is Russia or Poland.

The innkeeper with an abundance of wine bottles enters and puts an end to further questioning. Varlaam proceeds to get quite disgracefully drunk, and carols blithely for a few stanzas. Then like all other drunkards he begins to resent the fact that any one else is sober, and turns on Gregory, who says quietly that his business is his own, and that Varlaam may afford to dull his wits, but he cannot. When the gay old monk is finally too drowsy to interfere, Gregory questions the innkeeper sharply as to the best path and direction to the frontier, and she warns him to be cautious, for the patrols are searching all travelers, some culprit having recently escaped in this direction. Even while they talk comes a knocking at the door, and the woman in a flutter of alarm admits an armed guard. The officer awakens Varlaam and questions the two monks, who protest the innocence of their quest

and vouch for Gregory as their companion, but he is not completely satisfied, and peers closer into Varlaam's inflamed countenance. "Are you by any chance the Grischka we are looking for?" he asks, and hands his warrant to the monk to see. Of course, the poor old thing cannot read it in his bemused condition, so the officer gives it to Gregory, who reads aloud of the unpleasant fate awaiting him if he is captured. Therefore he prudently changes the description of the hunted man to fit that of the drunken monk. At once the alert soldiers pounce on the old fellow, with the result that he becomes suddenly sobered, and not as stupid as he seemed. If he cannot read, he can at least spell out the words, and here it says—he snatches the edict—a youth of t-w-e-n-t-y years. Why, ridiculous, he is not this Grischka, but Gregory must be! Gregory, however, is not asleep either; he has been prudently edging toward the window, and now suddenly leaps through it brandishing a knife, and disappears. For a moment every one is rooted to the spot with surprise, then rush pell-mell after him as the curtain descends.

The next scene shows us one of the intimate apartments of the Czar in the Kremlin at Moscow and we have a domestic glimpse of the royal family at home. Xenia, the pretty daughter, is gazing (through eyes filled with tears) at a locket she holds and singing sadly about her lover, dead in a foreign land. The Nurse rebukes her for her red eyes, and says that really Her Highness saw too little of the gentleman to be quite so broken-hearted over his death; girls have been known to console themselves for worse sorrows. But Xenia only cries the harder, reveling in her romantic woes. The garrulous old Nurse decides to distract her charge by singing an absurd ditty about a flea, but succeeds only in amusing the young Czarevitch, who by his behavior and mental development should be about four, but certainly looks fifteen at least, and very feminine. Small wonder that the Czar has his moments of concern over the Empire's future. Now for quite a while the stage is given over to the amusements of the youngster, as he and the Nurse play the game of the Khliost. The boy claps his hands and sings and shouts in infantile glee, and they chase each other about the room after true nursery fashion. Suddenly the Czar, Boris, comes into the room and the game stops dead, the Nurse almost strangling over her words and the effort to recapture her dignity. Boris is pleased, however, to be paternal and informal; he jokes with his son, and pats the fair hair of his weeping daughter, who salutes him as if he were no intimate relation, and asks him tremulously to pardon her tears. He is sympathetic,

however, and thinks she needs cheering, so sends her out with the Nurse, to amuse herself among her girl friends.

When he is left alone with his son, he turns with interest to the papers on the table which the boy is studying and finds with pride and pleasure that the child is poring over a map of Moscow and the surrounding country. A most worthy occupation for a future sovereign. And the boy, puffing out his little chest, shows off his knowledge for his father. The association of ideas gives Boris pause: his disappointed and unhappy daughter, his frail little son, with the precarious future of the crown, give him food for weighty thought. In a monologue of tragic power and densest Russian gloom, he reviews once more the revolting crime which placed him in his present exalted and uncomfortable position, and curses his own conscience which is undermining all his enjoyment of his power. Plots—mines—bombs everywhere, and famine and suffering and rebellion abroad in the land. Naturally every misfortune in the Empire is ascribed to him, he is accursed by every one, haunted day and night by the vision of the little murdered boy. He has no peace, and worst of all, no sleep! With a great sigh that is almost a sob he sinks heavily into a chair, the wondering eyes of the Czarevitch upon him.

In sudden contrast to the weight of gloom to which he has given voice, sounds of a squeaking and fantastic nature are now heard outside the room and he sends the boy out to discover what it may be, as the Court Boyar, with solemn flourish enters the apartment and announces the Prince Shouisky. "Let him come in," says the Czar. "You know how I love to listen to him!" His bitter irony does not escape the crafty Boyar who now leans forward and whispers a word or two of political scandal, sufficient to provoke the Czar's exclamation, "Let him be arrested at once!" Delightedly the Boyar goes out to perform that pleasing duty, and the little Czarevitch comes back, somewhat scared at the dignified bearing of his father, but bent on telling his tale. "It was only our old parrot!" he laughs, and then, encouraged to climb on the imperial knee, goes on with some vague and long-winded tale. His father, pretending to listen, is really brooding over the child and the future of all the Russias. He is singing to him fondly as the Prince Shouisky enters and bows in the dust. Boris greets him with a collection of insulting names which only a Russian Czar could use and expect to live. Shouisky, however, in his breeding and dignity, ignores the unpleasantness for a more important matter. A courier has brought the disturbing news of a young Pretender, who has the support of Poland, of the Pope, and of many of the people. Naturally Boris

is concerned. Who does the impostor pretend to be? Alas, if it costs him his head, Prince Shouisky must tell him that this youth calls himself *Dimitri*, the son of Ivan—claiming never to have been murdered by any one, and now emerging from prolonged exile.

In abject terror Boris stammers the one name which he fears, "Dimitri!" and little Feodor, frightened by his father's aspect, runs to him and seizes his hand. But the Czar frowns—this is no place for children, he orders the boy to go. The young prince abandons his infantile ways at once and with a touching dignity asks to be allowed to share his father's griefs, but his plea goes unheard and he is sent away. Boris gently closes the door after his son, then turns to Shouisky fiercely. It is a simple matter, if immediate action is taken. Let a cordon be thrown around the country so that not even a squirrel can slip through! But why get so excited, after all? He goes over and looks at Shouisky facetiously. Has Shouisky ever heard of *murdered* boys coming up out of their graves to bother mighty Czars who sit on the throne by the will of the people? Really it is a joke! He laughs a little wildly. Why doesn't Shouisky laugh too? It is funny. No? Well, he *must*. Hysterically he seizes the dignified prince by the nape of his neck and shakes him, but evokes no mirth. Suddenly sobered, he beseeches Shouisky to assure him that the murdered boy was really dead, and Shouisky describes in no uncertain adjectives the spectacle of the slaughtered child and his attendants. Boris is satisfied, and bids his counselor depart, which he does, casting a last anxious look at his monarch as he goes.

Boris, all alone, becomes a victim of all his accumulated terror and remorse. Wildly he stares at hideous haunting specters, wildly he cries to God for mercy and pity; finally in a paroxysm of agony and despair he falls on his knees choking and sobbing as the curtain falls.

ACT III. To the castle of Michek in Poland has come Gregory of the many names, who shall now be known as the false Dimitri. The scene shows us the garden, beautiful in the moonlight, and a great fountain playing among the flowers. Dimitri has been talking with a wordy old monk, Rangoni—whose rôle is usually cut out of the scene—and is now standing upon the terrace as a brilliant company of guests and pleasure-seekers comes out from the castle. Chief among them is Marina, their hostess, who is in the act of rejecting the attentions of an elderly man. The others are all talking politics and we gather that Muscovy is extremely un-

popular with the Poles. The ladies wonder if Marina's beauty may not be of service to them in a certain plot they have in mind. As she herself beckons them from the doorway, they follow her into the castle to drink her health, and their convivial shouts are heard from within. Dimitri curses the time he lost away from Marina, with whom he is obviously infatuated. He fears she is going to marry the old gentleman she talked with, and resolves that he himself will win her by dint of heroic measures. As *Czar of Russia* she will think a long time before she refuses him.

Whether or not the lady overhears his meditations it is difficult to say, but at least she enters forthwith. To his sentimental protestations she gives small attention, the thing which concerns her is the important question of whether or not—and if so, when—he is to enter Moscow as Czar. Dimitri does not care for her casual attitude toward his love, and the caustic sarcasm which barbs her words. He protests that all the Imperial glories are nothing to him in comparison with her, are in fact a very secondary matter. At these words she becomes exceedingly frank and tells him that she does not believe in the theory of "A hut and thee!" Candidly the only thing which interests her is to be Czarina of all the Russias. Dimitri is wounded at the callowness of her words, but if behind her materialism was a hidden motive to goad him to decisive action, her purpose is accomplished, for in a lyrical declamation he replies that her taunts shall be proved lies, and that as early as to-morrow he will head the troops against the Kremlin. With joy in her victory Marina softens and professes that she really loves and is proud of him, "her Czar"—but although we remain somewhat skeptical as to her sincerity, Dimitri is charmed with her change of mood, and as she flings herself at his feet in a wave of emotional enthusiasm, he raises her tenderly and assures her that he only awaits the joy of making her his queen. Embracing, they enter the castle, to the chorus of loud "Hochs" from within. We do not meet Marina again, but at least she has played her short scene with supreme success.

The next scene takes us to a road through the forest of Kromy. At a distance is the city, and on all sides the deep and vast stillness of the Russian winter. But only nature keeps silent, for once more the chorus is rampant. This time one of those little revolutions so indigenous to the local soil is in process of brewing. The stage is crowded with vagrants, and they are treating very roughly one of the Boyars, Kreutchov, who has had the misfortune to fall into their hands. The poor soul, with half his clothing torn from him, is bound and most unpleasantly gagged, and tied

against a tree-trunk. The men make little fires to warm themselves, then turning to their captive, mock his dignity and renown, and decide to pay him certain honors they have at hand, administered with leather whips. As they threaten him, the women approach, singing an interesting adaptation of an old folk air and chide him about the rumor that he has never paid any heed to love. Little urchins dance around him, and various unwholesome creatures come up individually to do him mock reverence.

Suddenly from the woods comes a poor Simpleton, who sits upon a mound of snow, and indifferent to all the others, sings a gentle song, which is almost a prayer, and full of the mysterious serenity of the simple souls of that dark country, one of the most striking bits of the whole score. As he feigns sleep, boys steal from him his one little coin, and to his wail are added the familiar voices of Missail and Varlaam, who now enter chanting ballads of the Czar's cruelty. The people, whose emotions are inflammable as tinder, cry out with zeal against Boris, and listen eagerly as the monks further press the cause of the young pretender, Dimitri. In the midst of their declamations, a party of Jesuits, led by Lovitzki and Tcherniakowsky, enter, and the two friars, jealous of their power, incite the rabble against them. In spite of their pious Latin chants, the unfortunate newcomers are promptly dragged off into the woods to be hanged, just as a flourish of trumpets is heard.

Now the stage fills with greater crowds, and the false Dimitri, on a superb white horse, enters followed by his retainers and soldiery. With a magnificent gesture he greets this ragged group of his future subjects who wildly acclaim him their deliverer, and in their excitement we are relieved to see them unbind the poor uncomfortable Boyar from his tree-trunk. Dimitri, adding the noble to his followers, as a matter of course, sweeps onward toward the city, followed by all the rabble, including the wretched Jesuits, who so narrowly escaped the gallows. Only the Simpleton is left on the stage, who among them all finds no cause for joy, and sits crooning his mournful refrain, as the curtain falls.

The third and last scene is laid in the council chamber within the marvelous, multicolored Kremlin. The great Duma is in solemn session. All the Boyars are there; all desire to speak; all are afraid to express their opinion first. There is confusion, murmuring, excited whispering. At last their voices become distinct with threats and plans for vengeance and retribution upon the usurper. Horrible torture and ignominious deaths of various

kinds are invented and urged by several members, but at last the Prince Shouisky who perhaps more than any of the others has a right to welcome the tyrant's downfall, asks instead for tolerance and clemency, and in the ensuing silence tells the assembly that he has thought it wise to play the spy of late and has seen enough of the Czar's state of mind and health to give him profound concern. He describes the hysterical visions to which Boris appears subject, which the Boyars can scarcely credit. In answer to their vociferous doubts the Czar enters. Quietly, like a magnificent pallid ghost he suddenly appears in their midst—they do not even heed him in their absorption, so that he hears the end of Shouisky's tale. When the Boyars do turn and see him standing there, they cower like naughty boys, for there is spirit left in their Emperor yet, even if it is a fabrication of lies which sustains him. With a mighty shout he repudiates his accusers and turns upon Shouisky, the noblest of them all, suddenly naming him as the assassin. The Prince, with the most admirable control, bows and asks the blessing of God upon the monarch who now, clothed in all the panoply of his sovereign dignity, stalks towards the dais and his throne. From here he begins his preamble, only to be interrupted by Shouisky again, seeking an audience for a petitioner, an old man, who has something mysterious to unfold to the Czar's ear. The interruption is unwarranted, you will probably agree, but the distraction is really most timely, and the harassed Boris, who by now is grasping at straws, bids the man enter. So Pimenn, the ancient monk whom we left writing his painstaking chronicle in a cell in Act I comes in, and begins to unfold a tale, "as told to him" by another ancient, a man blind from youth, who in a vision was visited by a pale boy, calling himself the Czarevitch Dimitri. The wraith bade the blind man seek out a tomb in the Cathedral of Ouglitch and there pray for healing. Having tried everything else and failed, the old man decided to obey this strange visitor, so after a long pilgrimage he reached Ouglitch, found the tomb of the royal child, prayed as told, and was straightway made to see. It is a simple tale with nothing in it of a sensational nature, but Boris, from the first mention of Dimitri has changed color, begun to mop his brow, grow restless, troubled, finally terrified. At the end something snaps, his nerve is gone. Moaning and gasping he clutches at his heart and falls back into the arms of his counselors who crowd about him in surprise and apprehension. Weakly he calls for his son, his little Feodor, and eager feet fly to find the boy. Others run in search of a priest. In a moment

the child has entered and with a whimper of terror thrown himself into the yearning arms of his agonizing parent.

Looking about him desperately at the seamed and hardened faces of his Boyars, Boris makes a pitiful gesture—he would be alone with his son! So they creep out in awe and pity, for the Angel of Death is plainly rustling his dark wings through the room and in the orchestra. So comes the tremendous farewell of the cruel, scheming, unprincipled, ambitious Usurper, to the one tender thing in all the world that by the very calling forth of one unselfish thought in that seamed and wicked heart, has the power to purify the departing soul. Touching in the emotional despair of its tragic music, stirring in its noble utterances, this farewell of the Czar Boris is a thing that will move the most indifferent listener to unsuspected depths. No detail of his children's future is forgotten by the dying monarch, no more exalted ideals of justice and good government could be planted in a young mind. Above all, on the wings of a faintly breathed prayer, all question of the boy's right of succession by Divine Right is banished in a phrase of transfigured sincerity. The father's blessing, the Emperor's blessing, and finally the last terrifying kiss. Naturally the high-strung child weeps bitterly; and from without, a mournful bell tolls with hollow note, while voices chant in funereal cadences.

Suddenly the Boyars reënter in solemn procession and come toward the throne. Boris, his eyes alight with the last gleam of his old fire, starts up to his full height. "Stop!" he orders. "I am still the Czar!" But a spasm clutches at his heart. With a last terrible sob he abdicates, and pushing forward his little whimpering child, cries with a mighty voice, "Behold your young Czar!" and dies. The curtain falls upon the end of one of the strangest and, it must be confessed, most tedious episodes in history.

CARMEN

By GEORGES BIZET

First Produced at the Opéra Comique, Paris, 1875

EVEN the most cautious opera-goer may purchase a seat for *Carmen* in the full and placid assurance that no risk of even one dull moment is thereby incurred. In these enlightened days when the ubiquitous phonograph is so generously supplemented by the evening radio concert, excerpts from *Carmen* are rapidly becoming as familiar as the weather report, and the opera-goer may proudly smile through an entire performance at a succession of familiar quotations. Add to this pleasing quality, a whirl of color and action, a heroine as naughty as she is fascinating, a plot providing for the machinations of smugglers, the dash of bull-fighters, the charms of innumerable girls, both dancing and cigarette-smoking, and including in its development one murder, three lively fights, and numerous arrests—one is certain to be in M. Bizet's debt for an excellent evening's entertainment.

The Overture introduces the crashing March to the Bull-fight which is not heard again until ACT IV, and then teases us with snatches of other melodies to be revealed later in their full glory, most of which we can, but should not, hum right along with the orchestra.

ACT I. The rising curtain shows a public square in the city of Seville, which you will recognize only if you have not been there. On the right is a cigarette factory, at the back center is a bridge leading down with many steps to the stage, while at the left is the guard-house of the Almanza Dragoons. Several of these ornate gentlemen are lounging about smoking and casting an eye upon the passing youth and beauty of Seville. It is a busy spot; throngs of supers walk industriously up and down, chatting and inspecting the papier-mâché fruit and other wares in the market stalls. The Dragoons are irresistibly moved to comment upon all this in song, which they finish just as the orchestra rather excitedly yet timidly introduces Micaela.

It is apparent at once that Micaela is an excellent young woman,

her extreme verdure and innocence are overwhelming, the cut of her virginial blue costume proclaims the hand of the home seamstress, her long flaxen braids further protest her ignorance of the prevailing mode. She is a country mouse, a sweet young creature, but the Dragoons are not unimpressed. She accosts them timidly, stating that she seeks a corporal. Morales obligingly confesses to that rank, but Micaela, quite failing to catch the implication, shows no interest in any corporal but one Don José. Morales then suggests that the fortunate man may be one of the guard which is about to relieve them, and is quite ready to amuse her while she waits, but Micaela, her little heart fluttering in the presence of so many great big men, promises to come back, and skips coyly from the scene.

No sooner has she gone than in the distance is heard the change of guard arriving. Their march has an agitating rhythm very tempting to a toe on the seat in front. The soldiers are preceded by a company of small boys, who march and sing "Ta-ta-ra-ta-ta" with ear-piercing enthusiasm, enjoying every moment heartily. Then the guard changes with admirably rehearsed precision, and in a moment Don José, tenor and hero, is distinguished from his comrades by Morales' salutation. He is quite palpitant when told of the dear little girl in blue, and guesses at once that it must have been Micaela, with whom he has long cherished a sentimental understanding. To prove his indifference to all other female charms, he turns his back upon the petticoats with which the stage is now beginning to swarm, and gives his whole attention to the repairing of his watch-chain. The factory then rings its bell and the cigarette girls respond with gratifying punctuality. They are all smoking, swaying arm in arm, and singing very nicely about the pleasures of Nicotine.

A crowd had gathered for the change of the guard, and all the young blades have now pushed forward to the flirting line upon the arrival of the girls, but they are restless, not very flattering, for they ignore all those present in their eager inquiry for a certain Carmencita. At last they see her, late as usual, coming over the bridge. She is, or should be, tall, slenderly voluptuous, with black hair and flushed dark skin, and a dangerous gleam in her eye. Her clothes, although scarcely opulent, have a vivid gypsy allure, and she has always, always a red carnation in her teeth. She flashes a brilliant smile without dropping the flower, and joins the mob below. At once there is a riot among her admirers, each begging for a word of affection. But this is an old story to Carmen, and as for *love*, perhaps she will try it to-mor-

row, perhaps never, but anyway, not to-day! This reminds her of one of her favorite songs (and yours), *The Habañera*, all about what a rebellious little bird love is, so she stops to sing it then and there. Her comrades like it immensely and join in the chorus, but Don José is preoccupied and deaf to Carmen's efforts. She observes him and is piqued by his indifference. When she reaches the impertinent last line of her song, "Take care of yourself!" she bends toward him and flings her gaudy carnation at his heart, then runs swiftly into the factory, leaving the crowd convulsed over her roguishness.

José picks up the flower. That is his first mistake—he inhales its fragrance, and from that moment he is lost. Carmen and her red flower, and her insolent behavior, have disconcerted him dangerously.

He hides the flower beneath his coat just in time, for Micaela is returning. He is delighted to see the child, even if still upset by his recent encounter, and he is especially glad of a letter from his mother containing most welcome coin of the realm, and graciously permits Micaela to deliver with lingering accuracy the maternal kiss. In fact the pretty child's lily cheek against his, and her innocent rapture, move him to the tenderest sentiment. He induces her to receive another kiss as proxy for his mother, and when she has gone, his soul utterly revolts against that fascinating gypsy hussy who so recently insinuated herself into his thoughts. He grasps her flower to destroy it, when suddenly within the factory resounds a female shriek. The doors open and excited girls fill the place. They rush to the soldiers, all screeching and clawing at once. The discipline of the Dragoons is threatened until up steps the brave Captain Zuniga and gathers the information that Carmen has started a little disagreement which terminated in bloodshed. He dispatches Don José to drag out the minx. She appears, minus a few of her outer garments, scratched and bleeding, but evidently enjoying the situation. It is already obvious to us, as to her, that Don José is the captive, not she. However, her charms have little effect upon Zuniga, she only succeeds in infuriating him, as in reply to his questions she sings "Tra-la-la," each repetition upon a higher key of insolence. In disgust, he makes out a warrant for her imprisonment, her hands are tied behind her back and she is left to the guardianship of José, as the crowd and the rest of the soldiers slowly disperse.

While the valiant Dragoon paces to and fro, conscious of a subtly irritating fascination, Carmen sits on his chair and commences a quaint soliloquy about a handsome soldier for whom she

has conceived a burning affection. She cares not that he is neither a captain nor a lieutenant, merely a little corporal, and what is more, she is confident that he returns her love and will promptly liberate her. Don José is interested, he pricks up his ears, while feigning extreme contempt. Next, as is Carmen's custom, she beguiles herself with song, this time a saucy Spanish thing, "*Près des Remparts de Seville*," about a pleasant little road-house kept by Lillas Pastia, where she, Carmen, can and will meet any gentleman of her choice. Don José sternly orders "Silence!" but Carmen explains that she is only singing to herself, and concludes by rising and treading an arch measure or two for her own further amusement. The Dragoon is completely demoralized, he surrenders without a struggle, and the ropes are untied. As the guard again appears in strength to escort her to prison, she feigns elaborate docility, and keeping her hands behind her, marches up the bridge. At the very top she turns, and pushing her manly escorts over like so many wooden soldiers, flings the rope in Zuniga's face and disappears amid the merry laughter of the crowd.

ACT II. Two months have passed, and Don José has been marking time in prison for his little lapse about Carmen and the rope, but he is to be liberated to-day. The opening scene shows the road-house of Lillas Pastia, and a very good party in progress. Liquid cheer flows merrily on all sides. Zuniga and Morales are there, and Carmen in brilliant plumage and exuberant mood. The gypsy music has entered into her blood; first she sings delightfully with her girl friends, Mercedes and Frasquita, and then is easily persuaded to dance upon a table-top until she drops breathless.

About this time, Pastia is beginning to get nervous, and wishes to close up for the night, but before he can do anything about it every one is diverted by the sound of a luscious baritone singing in the distance. They recognize at once the voice of the great Escamillo, first toreador of Grenada, and in a moment he enters, and with him comes the famous song, always a severe strain on an audience eager to accompany him *sotto voce*. Escamillo is a handsome fellow and debonair, not unaware of his own attractions. He tosses his red cloak about imaginatively, his comrades listening and watching breathlessly, then when he has vocally slain all the bulls, he strolls over to Carmen, who has caught his eye. But she is not responsive, absence is still lending enchantment to Don José. So, as Pastia now bustles in to put up his shutters, the toreador and the crowd decide to go home.

Carmen stays on, however, hoping for the absent one, and Mercedes and Frasquita steal back to join her, followed by two amusing comedy smugglers, El Dancairo and El Remendado. They want help in one of their questionable undertakings, and the ladies proving to be not averse, they all indulge in a quintet of amusing patter about their clandestine affairs. But Carmen is not ready to leave until she sees José. Some one suggests recruiting him to their ranks.

"Not at all a bad idea!" agrees Carmen. "Leave it to me!" And they do.

Almost immediately Don José's call of "*Halte-là*" sounds in the distance and in a moment more the lovers embrace passionately. But José is nervous; Carmen's story of her dance for the officer is distasteful to him; he insists upon his own private dance, and Carmen, anxious to please, proceeds to gratify him. She sings, she dances, the most ultra in her *répertoire*, but his pleasure is only perfunctory; unfortunately José's ear has been caught by the bugle of his troop, calling them to their quarters. As it grows fainter in the distance he starts up to obey. This is too much for Carmen; she is not used to such masculine callousness. She flings his sword and helmet upon the ground to ease her feelings, and upbraids him jealously for his stupid choice of duty before love. Her passionate outburst completely subjugates José, for he is a spineless creature at best; and instead of going, he pulls out the old red carnation and begins to sing to it. He is tormented by indecision, and to complicate matters, just then a knock sounds at the gate. It is Zuniga, his troop safely in bed for the night, who has decided to look in again on Carmen. What he sees shocks him intensely. On the grounds of military discipline, he proceeds to administer chastisement at once, but Carmen calls for help in time to prevent both battle and murder. The smuggler pair induce Zuniga to depart at the point of their pistols, and Don José, now sunk deep in the crime of insubordination as well as desertion, is easily persuaded to join the little band of smugglers.

ACT III. This act is introduced by music so uncannily descriptive, that when the curtain rises we see exactly what we have expected. A rocky picturesque spot on a mountain pass, in mysterious twilight. The gypsy smugglers mount wearily but doggedly with their burdens to the camping-ground. Soon all our old friends appear, Carmen, Don José, Frasquita, Mercedes, and the comedy pair, Remendado and Dancairo. Carmen is very chic in a sports costume of local design; usually a red or green scarf

bound about her head topped by a wide sombrero, and dark wide skirts and boots. One prima donna, however, nicely lean of haunch, clad her in a suit of velvet knickers with gratifying effect.

Carmen is tired and on edge, and as for Don José, his wretchedness and disappointment are only too obvious. Indeed, the lovers are not getting along as well as might have been expected. Carmen is a fickle jade and none knows this better than she herself. Just now she is teasing her inward eye with recollections of the handsome toreador who has known just how to handle her. A dash of indifference, a few dizzy exploits in the bull-ring, and he has her heart in his pocket. José comes over to Carmen with the idea of thrashing out the situation, but she is aloof and cool, suggesting that if he is discontented the very best remedy is the downhill path leading homeward. As far as she is concerned he is free to take it at once; but José, whose self-control has never been conspicuous, prefers to settle the matter in another way. He produces a long sharp dagger with which he threatens her; but she turns not a hair, merely shrugging her shoulders at fate and strolling over to watch Frasquita and Mercedes who are telling their fortunes with cards. Presently she is moved to try her own luck but the results are depressing. "*La Mort . . . toujours la Mort!*" she chants while the orchestra shudders and prophecies dark deeds. She shakes off her somber mood when the scouts return announcing that all is clear for the passage of the frontier, and thinks of a rather clever plan by which she will divert the attention of the Customs Guards while the others slip through. The suggestion is taken up by the whole band with alacrity, and they move off, leaving José behind some rocks as rear guard.

Suddenly a guide appears, beckons, and exits, whereupon Micaela, still wearing the simple little blue costume, trembles on to the scene quite frightened to death at finding herself alone upon this big dark mountain. She seeks protection at once in prayer, declaring valiantly in the most lovely music, that she is not at all afraid. The simple child has come once more with a message from José's old mother, who is now hanging to life by a mere thread ever since she heard of her son's defection to the toils of the gypsy hussy. Micaela thinks she may see this terrible woman, and prays for courage. Suddenly there is a shot, and Micaela scurries away like a rabbit. It was José's bullet that grazed the hat of a man coming up the pass. It is none other than the bold Escamillo who explains that he is in search of Carmen, his sweetheart, who, although she ran off with a fool of a deserting Dra-

goon, he understands to be quite ready for a change. At this José introduces himself with a flourish of his dagger, and Escamillo, always spoiling for a fight, wraps his cloak about his arm according to the rules, and they close in.

Carmen and one of the smugglers have heard the shot and return just at this interesting moment. Their cries bring back the whole band and bloodshed is once more averted. Escamillo, cool and unruffled, exchanges a bit of persiflage with Carmen, and inviting the whole company to his next bull-fight, departs for home, caroling blithely. But José, raging and struggling in the arms of his comrades, casts ominous glances after his enemy, and bitterly reproaches Carmen, while she, deaf to his pleas and threats, casually turns her back.

Then some one discovers the cowering Micaela and drags her from her hiding-place. She is almost helpless with terror, but manages to gasp out her plea that José return with her to his mother's bedside. Carmen heartily endorses the plan, but her enthusiasm is unwelcome to José, who, although he agrees to go, mutters dark hints about their next meeting. Carmen is unconcerned. Hearing once more Escamillo's song drifting up from below, she starts to follow her new lover, but Don José bars her way with drawn knife. Carmen changes her mind, and merely leans over to watch, and Micaela finally succeeds in dragging away the wretched Dragoon.

ACT IV. The curtain goes up upon much gayety and excitement. It is the square before the arena, and the day of the big fight. Every one is in holiday mood, chattering light-heartedly. The ballet contributes a few ebullient moments of fandango, the place is alive with supers, chorus, and the lesser *artisti*, weaving to and fro and in and out. And now, crashing delightfully upon our ears bursts the March to the Bull-fight which was hinted at so vigorously in the overture. It lifts our spirit free of the depression induced by ACT III. The parade is coming in all its pomp and circumstance . . . the *chulos*, the handsome *piccadors*, the strangely feminine *bandilleros* with their banners, the horses, apprehensive of the footlights, and last, when everything is at its noisiest, an ancient barouche containing Escamillo in all his glory, and Carmen arrayed like the field lilies. They acknowledge the plaudits of the crowd, and then with a naïve lack of self-consciousness take a long moment to sing about their love for each other in the most charming manner.

They are interrupted by the advent of the Alcalde, the high

dignitary who is to open the festivities, and all crowd in behind him, except Carmen, who lingers a moment to chat with her girl friends, who whisper anxiously a warning about José. She decides in a flash of bravado to wait and see him, and as soon as the girls have gone into the arena, he appears, having slunk about all morning for this opportunity. He is looking far from well and Carmen finds his personality exceedingly distasteful. In reply to impassioned pleading she is sarcastic, at his threats she is frigidly indifferent.

Suddenly cheers and shouts of victory come from the arena, and at Carmen's ill-concealed rapture José pulls out a long and wickedly curved knife. Carmen sees it and shrugs; even yet she does not take him seriously. Once more the bugles within blow and the mob exults. Carmen tosses her head and starts for the doors to behold the triumph of her new lover, only to find her way barred by José and his ugly weapon. Now for the first time Carmen is frightened; this is no lover's peevishness, but dead earnest. José's teeth are bared in an ugly snarl, his weapon is menacing. Carmen, in a revulsion of terror, tears off his ring from her finger and, flinging it at his feet, dashes for the gate. José follows and ungallantly stabs her in the back. Down she rolls, over and over. When the crowd and the smugly triumphant Escamillo emerge, they find this most unpleasant thrill awaiting them. José gives himself up promptly to an officer, but cannot leave without one last sob over the body of his adored Carmen.

The curtain falls.

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA

By PIETRO MASCAGNI

First Sung in Rome, 1890

WHEN a young man of twenty-one years wrote a prize opera called *Rustic Chivalry*, it promptly set the musical world on fire; he was hailed as another Verdi, and succeeding sparks from his anvil were awaited with eagerness—but they failed to kindle. *Cavalleria Rusticana* remains the only work which entitles him to fame, but so worthy is it that his immortality rests perfectly secure in its one passionate act. The opera is brief, but packed full to the brim with every ingredient known as “sure-fire.” No opera house can function even for a season without it and its side-partner, *Pagliacci*. It is lurid melodrama, reeking with passion and gore, but there is *something* about it—the story, the music, or both—which in spite of their emotional tawdriness, will keep it perennially popular long after the more progressive of modern efforts are gathering dust on forgotten shelves. Perhaps it is the *Intermezzo*—you remember you struggled with it at the grammar-school concert, and you heard it only this afternoon on the street hurdy-gurdy—at any rate, it cannot die!

As the orchestra plays a prelude of smoldering Sicilian hatred, we are surprised to hear the tenor trying his voice a little more loudly than usual behind the curtain. However, this time he has really committed no such indiscretion. It is Turridu, the hero, singing a serenade to his lovely Lola, and the unusual effect is thoroughly pleasing. As he finishes, the curtain rises to show the public square of a small Sicilian village on Easter Sunday. On the right is a church, on the left the house and wine-shop of Turridu and his Mamma Lucia.

The chorus is entering, the women singing harmlessly of birds and flowers, the men extolling their sweethearts' charms, and as they congregate before the church steps, they appropriately modify their words to include praise of the Virgin.

Santuzza, the oppressed heroine of the play, enters and crosses

to the wine-shop door. She is dark and brooding, with tragedy sitting conspicuously upon her brow. There is not a doubt in our minds from our very first glimpse of her that she harbors a formidable secret sorrow. Mamma Lucia meets her on the steps and is scarcely cordial. When she asks for friend Turridu, Mamma is very rude. But Santuzza is used to rebuffs, and she compares herself so humbly to the Magdalen that Mamma at last becomes interested. "My son has gone to Francofonte for more wine. Why do you ask?" she vouchsafes.

"Oh, no, he hasn't," groans Santuzza. "I saw him at midnight!"

"Is it possible? . . . Come right in, my dear, and tell me more!" Lucia is now much concerned.

But Santuzza cannot come in, she is an outcast, is in fact excommunicated. She subtly allows Mamma and the audience to infer that she finds herself in a certain moral and physical predicament.

At this moment Alfio, the dashing mail-carrier, creates a stir by arriving in their midst. He is in splendid form, cracking his whip and expressing his general satisfaction with his job and with Lola, his wife. Mamma Lucia, annoyed at his exuberance, hopes cynically that he may continue as merry, and when he asks for his favorite wine, tells him that Turridu has gone away to procure it. "But I saw him this morning early, near my house!" says the argumentative carrier, and Santuzza hushes Turridu's Mamma's astonishment.

The Easter anthem now sounds loudly from the church, and all the people who have made one excuse or another not to go inside, kneel on the porch steps and join in the music. Santuzza, the humblest of them all, has nevertheless quite the best voice, for it soars gloriously above all the others. Before long the stage is empty of all but the two women again.

"Why did you silence me when Alfio said that about seeing Turridu?" asks the curious old woman.

"Well, if you must know the unpleasant truth," begins the lachrymose girl, "listen. . . ." She then proceeds to relate in most melodious if tragic utterance her blighted romance. Turridu, before going to the wars, loved Lola. In his absence the fickle jade married Alfio. Turridu returned, sought consolation in a new affair; he won Santuzza's heart, betrayed her unconcernedly; and then rebounded back to Lola, who had no scruples whatever about receiving his attentions. Such is the scandalous state of affairs, and Mamma is properly horrified. Santuzza persuades her to go

into the church and pray about it while she makes one more appeal to her philandering lover.

Turridu enters, clad in the most becoming of velvet suits. He is surprised that Santuzza is not in church on Easter Sunday, but she gently reminds him just why she is beyond the pale, and states her desire for a short conversation. Turridu is bored, and wary of a scene. He looks about for his mother, but Santuzza is not to be evaded. With utter ruthlessness she alludes to his midnight visit to Lola, and then proceeds to harangue him as have foolish women to faithless lovers since time began, with the inevitable result. He casts her off, and one can scarcely blame him, so heavy, so mournful, so thoroughly bad company has she become. Then she makes the mistake of abasing herself, declaring her unworthiness and her faithfulness in the face of his abuse, until the man is disgusted.

Lola, however, merrily interrupts this scene, coming gaily in, singing of her nefarious infatuation. She pauses on the stage long enough to pique Turridu, to mock at Santuzza, and then goes airily into the church, stating casually that she finds it perfectly possible to reconcile secular *amours* and religious devotion, to Santuzza's complete horror. Lola is only with us for a brief interval, but her music manages to convey to us so completely her shallow, vain and treacherous personality that we feel we have had quite enough of the woman.

Now Santuzza foolishly renews her taunts to her faithless lover, and nothing could be more ill-timed. Lola, in her cold and gay indifference, has seemed to him infinitely preferable to the funereal Santuzza. With a few jealous reproaches she goads him into the most ungentlemanly expedient of throwing her into the ditch, perhaps an example of the titular "rustic chivalry." At any rate, when he has left her to enter the church, the worm turns at last, and she vows to make his Easter a memorably unpleasant one.

Alfio now enters as if conjured there by her desire, and she loses no time in presenting him with the hair-raising information of his wife's perfidy. Santuzza's voice is colorless, her emotion a white flame, as she sums up her accusation. When he doubts, she says that even *lies* could not improve *her* condition, and with this crushing argument he is forced to accept this most brutal of Easter surprises, naturally vowing the utmost in *vendetta*. They both gloomily depart.

Now the stage is empty, and nothing distracts our emotional reaction to the famous Intermezzo. Forget your infantile struggles

with its chords, the hurdy-gurdies, and the ferry accordions, and listen to it as a *genre* interpretation of the grim little tragedy crouching in the wings, which will spring into a gory and inevitable climax as soon as the last palpitant notes release it. As such it will afford you an agreeable surprise.

On the forty-ninth bar the people come out of church, Turridu gay as a lark, with Lola on his arm, and no crêpe-hanging Santuzza about, to throw a wet blanket on his fun. He generously invites his friends to drink his Mamma's wine. The effect is instantly stimulating and merriment runs high as Alfio approaches. Turridu extends a cup to him, but he rejects it, he has something more pressing on his mind. The women begin to feel apprehensive and move off, and the two men take up the quaint ceremonial of the challenge. They embrace, and then Turridu, according to their yokel custom, bites Alfio's ear, as definite token of his acceptance. "Well bitten!" cries Alfio with praiseworthy absence of resentment. "Meet me behind the garden." And he disappears.

Turridu now turns to Mamma, who is busy with the chairs and tables. She does not understand his sudden burst of affection nor his pious desire for her prayers; still more is her simple mind confused by his request that she be a mother to his *dear Santuzza*. Not having observed the ear-biting, she is at a loss to explain this death-bed repentance. Stopping her protests with fond kisses, her velvet-clad boy finally tears himself away. As she starts to follow him she meets Santuzza, who enfolds her in a damp embrace. What happens behind the garden must happen with dispatch. Turridu of the "good bite" can hardly have put forth his best efforts this time, for in a moment the stage is filled with hysterical villagers shrieking the news of his murder.

Santuzza and Mamma both very naturally swoon at once, and the curtain falls.

LE COQ D'OR

By N. RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

First Produced in Moscow, 1910

THIS piece of fantasy is as Russian in its essence as *vodka* or beet-soup, and the libretto entreats us not to take it at all seriously. However, the poor artists who first appeared in the principal rôles must have thought it a very serious matter indeed, for they were forced to sing with what breath was left them from continuous dancing, and it was a problem whether to cast the characters from those members of the ballet who chanced to have passable voices, or those members of the vocal company who might be endowed with agile limbs. This may have been all very well in a country where babies begin dancing before they are weaned, but in the more staid Anglo-Saxon opera houses it presented insurmountable difficulties. M. Fokine, with wits as nimble as his toes, contrived an ingenious compromise, and after his plan the opera has been successfully given in London, Paris and New York. The principal singers and chorus appear as "Voices" merely, and sit in a sort of grandstand on either side of the stage, dressed in caps and gowns of a scholastic purple, and looking for all the world like a choir rehearsal. In the center of the stage, left free for their gyrations, the ballet struts, pantomimes and dances the action of the play. It is a unique and diverting effect, but the entire opera is like nothing of normal experience. It is the playful imagination of a childlike people run riot in musical and scenic splashes of crude and beautiful reds, blues, greens and yellows, laid on with a naïve brush.

Before the curtain parts to show us the above, a strange individual clad in an exaggeration of the astrologer's traditional robes, comes before the footlights and informs us that through his magic he is about to show us a fairy story brought to life, but that it is not true, and we need only take to heart a moral carefully hidden therein for those with understanding. With this charming introduction, the play begins.

In the space between the serried ranks of the "Voices" we see a solemn meeting of the Duma in the Never-Never Land of King Dodon. According to the stage directions, there is a feeling that something very extraordinary is about to transpire, but whether that feeling is confined to stage or audience we are not told. We do not need to be. The King himself is on his throne, wearing of course his crown, ermine, and other symbols of his estate, and looking like the fattest, jolliest monarch of all tradition. Near him are his two sons, and around him the solemn and stately Boyars, among whom we see General Polkan, with the longest and most bristling beard ever grown. Dodon is, in spite of his amiable countenance, very much oppressed by the cares and responsibilities of his office; he is sick of rushing about his kingdom with his army, frantically trying to ward off invaders from first the north, then the south, or east or west. He would like time to sleep. He peevishly asks the advice of his learned councilors on this matter. One speaks up and regrets the absence of a certain fortune-teller who might settle the problem by means of beans; another remembers a witch who read prophecies in the dregs of wine. This leads to a rather violent and disgraceful dispute among them all as to the relative merits of beans versus dregs, and is only silenced by the appearance of our friend the Astrologer, who offers to give the King a present of a marvelous Golden Cock, which if placed advantageously upon a steeple will keep the kingdom continually forewarned of either peace or war, and relieve the harassed monarch of all anxiety.

Dodon is perfectly entranced with the gift, and he and the dignified Boyars push and crowd about the Astrologer as he pulls out of a bag the extraordinary bird and exhibits its ability to crow and flap its wings. Messengers are dispatched at once to set it on the tallest spire, and the King promises the Wise Man any reward he may name. The Astrologer can think of nothing for the present and goes off chuckling and bowing elaborately.

Now King Dodon feels that he can safely dismiss the Duma, to amuse themselves with whatever form of diversion most appeals, but that he for his part will go straight to bed. His housekeeper, Amalfa, a motherly, doting old body, appears at this juncture and Dodon commands her to have his bed brought out here in the sun—the spring weather is too delightful to miss, and besides he can better hear the Golden Cock.

So a very snug little gilded bed is brought out for His Majesty, and Amalfa tempts him with a variety of food before he settles down for his nap. Nothing loath he eats and yawns, yawns and

eats, and finally falls over sound asleep. Amalfa tucks him in nicely and retires on tiptoe. His sleep is destined to be brief.* The erratic bird upon the spire has a *crise de nerfs* and summons the armies to mobilize hastily—then suddenly reverses and shouts that "All's well!" No sooner does quiet reign than "To arms!" the creature crows. On the last alarm the people decide they had really better wake the King, so poor Dodon gets up again and sleepily goes over to his throne from which he announces to the people that probably they had better arm and that he supposes that he too will have to take his place at the head of the troops. He calls for his armor and has a dreadful time getting into it; it is rusty and dusty with disuse and His Majesty has grown a bit corpulent. When finally buckled in he cannot walk, but the attendants somehow hoist him to the back of his gentle white palfrey, and he rides off a bit apprehensively with his commander-in-chief, amidst shouts of kindly advice from the populace to keep himself well in the rear of the action.

ACT II. The armies of King Dodon have fared very badly indeed. Perhaps had the Golden Cock been a trifle less hysterical and adhered to its first conviction, the troops might have been there in time, but now the dead lie in gruesome windrows; on the adjacent trees sit enormous birds of unhealthy appearance, waiting—waiting; and on the moonlit battlefield the shaky survivors sit among their fallen comrades and sing sad songs. Presently the King and the General ride in upon drooping steeds and, beholding the slaughter, begin to sob, as do all the soldiers, with no effort at restraint. The King perceives that his two sons are among the fallen, and his grief breaks out afresh, while he vows that only old men should go to war so that the young can live to grow up. Not a bad idea!

Now the first rays of dawn appear and illumine a strange object, which, on examination, proves to be a tent, garishly painted with all the colors of the spectrum. The soldiers do not like the look of it and valiantly run away, but the two old men wait curiously to see what will happen. As the sun rises higher, the flaps open and out comes a young woman of startling beauty, with the most extraordinary eyelashes in the world. She ignores the humans and addresses the sun which is just coming over the horizon. This *Hymn to the Sun* is the most beautiful and most often quoted number in the vocal score, of an exotic and haunting

* Some productions show the beguiling dreams of the sleeping monarch.

loveliness that is nevertheless very hard to recall almost as soon as heard. The King stamps the effort with his approval, and the General suggests that if this beautiful Princess feels moved to entertain them further, they have really no pressing engagements. In reply to their questions she states modestly that she is the Virgin Queen of Shemakhan, and that she is in the act of stealing upon Dodon's kingdom to capture it.

"Without any army?" questions the astounded man.

"Armies are not the only devastators!" replies the Princess, raising her sweeping lashes.

Clapping her hands she summons slaves with wine for their entertainment, and when the cautious old gentlemen fear poison, sends them such a reproachful and ravishing glance that they hastily drain their cups in embarrassment. The men now begin a little polite conversation, but the temperamental Queen objects to the presence of the General, and Polkan is forced to retire. He goes behind the tent well within earshot, as we observe by the tell-tale beard which sticks from his hiding-place. Now the ingenuous Queen begins to describe for the King, who, it must be confessed, seems a little uneasy at her alluring propinquity, all the marvels of her personal beauty, and as she proceeds in great detail, Dodon becomes so pale with emotion that she fears he is ill. He thinks that he is probably a bit liverish, but it is an unfortunate admission, for she immediately suggests a few corrective exercises. Dodon is alarmed, his bones are stiff, he has not danced since childhood, but he can refuse her nothing. Now inexplicably she begins to weep, and the fatuous monarch is all concern. It appears that she is distressed because every one always agrees with her, but Dodon gallantly declares his willingness to thwart her whenever she wishes, and begins by refusing to dance. The unreasonable woman is angry at this and says, "Oh, very well then, I will have Polkan as partner!" But the cautious General, having stuck his head around the tent, promptly retires again. The King cannot bear her distress, he will dance after all. Stiff in the joints, but warming up as the music gets into his blood, he manages a very pretty set of capers, while the Princess circles about him like a butterfly, to the huge delight of all the soldiers who now sneak back to see the fun.

Faster and faster the old man turns until his knees give way and his breath leaves him. The Queen's little black slave supports his exhausted body to a couch on which he falls, but there is life left in the old man yet, and with such breath as he has left he promptly proposes to his lovely partner. She is a bit uncertain;

he had better describe for her some of the inducements he has to offer. Well, she will have nothing to do but eat sweets, rest and listen to fairy tales! The prospect is too alluring! She accepts him on the spot, and they depart for his city in triumphal procession, her slaves chanting rather uncomplimentary notes on the bridegroom's personal appearance, but the soldiers shouting spontaneous "Hurrahs!" and the King himself, now fully recovered, capering in glee.

ACT III brings us back to King Dodon's city, where the inhabitants are apparently suffering greatly from the heat and the dread of an approaching thunderstorm. There is intense excitement and apprehension in the air. From time to time messengers disappear on the dead run into the palace, but as yet the royal *cortège* has not arrived. The people, their nerves on edge, murmur together and surge to and fro. Only the sight of the gilded Cock upon the steeple, with wings folded and placid mien, keeps them from utter panic. When Amalfa comes from the palace to sniff the air, they all make a rush for her to kiss her skirts and plead for news of the King. She teases them for a moment, then tells them the great Secret—that they are about to be presented with a Queen! This cheers them with the thought that it means a holiday, but they are not so pleased at the mystery surrounding the fate of the two young Princes. However, they have no time to think further, for the Bridal Procession is at hand, and they hasten to obey Amalfa's injunction and, "like goats," leap about for joy.

Now an extraordinary procession advances. First the surviving warriors, with faces foolishly puffed out with pride, and then the extremely miscellaneous train of the Queen, comprising every sort of hobgoblin, dwarf and freak that the most insane imagination could devise. The sight of all these wonders quite dispels the gloom which had set so heavily upon Dodon's city, and the people turn somersaults and perform astonishing antics from sheer enthusiasm. They shout and sing as the chariot containing the royal pair comes in sight. Poor Dodon has aged conspicuously under the bonds of matrimony and keeps an anxious weather eye upon his beautiful spouse, under whose spell he is obviously languishing.

On the porch of one of the houses now appears the Astrologer, who attracts the instant attention of the Queen, and she demands silence to ask who he is. The King is delighted to see his old friend, and welcomes him with outstretched hands, but the old



ROSINA GALLI AS THE PRINCESS IN *LE COQ D'OR*

seer never takes his eye from the face of the Queen and approaches the pair with purposeful stride. It has suddenly occurred to him that now he knows what he wants in the way of a reward for his Golden Cock—nothing more nor less than the Queen's person.

The King is positively insulted at the impertinence of this request. At his bidding some of the guards try to drag the old man off, but he resists. Dodon is annoyed, so taps the poor Astrologer neatly upon his pate with the royal scepter, and he falls dead. The sun clouds over, the thunder rolls, and His Majesty turns a little apprehensively to the Queen. She laughs unconcernedly, however; such trifles as a murder or two give her no concern. The King, shaking off his superstitious dread, suggests a kiss from his bride as a good omen, but she finds his caresses distasteful in the extreme and says so. The poor King feels a little hurt; he tries to turn the matter off as a jest, but the Queen sees no humor in it whatsoever.

Apparently the Golden Cock shares her sentiments, for after a few frantic revolutions upon his exalted perch, the temperamental bird suddenly flies down, and pecking the monarch severely upon the forehead, quickly dispatches him to his ancestors. Now at last the Queen sees the point of the joke. In the moment of thunder and darkness which follows the King's execution we hear her ringing laugh, but we never see her nor the Cock again. The people gather about the body of their departed ruler and bewail him as the gentlest creature that ever wore a crown, a monarch who ruled with folded hands, and whose wrath was like a summer rain. As they fall on their faces in the throes of their mighty grief, the curtains falls.

But wait a moment! Out from behind it steps the Astrologer. His wound was not fatal after all; he is feeling quite himself again, and hopes that we have not been too upset by all these tragic events. It is foolish to take it deeply to heart, for the whole thing was doubtless a dream anyway, and he and the Queen probably the only real persons in it.

FAUST

By CHARLES GOUNOD

First Produced in Paris, 1859

No less than sixteen composers have used the legend of Dr. Faustus in one way or another as material for musical composition, but it remained for Gounod to make of it the very flower and perfection of operas, beloved and understood by high and low, rich and poor; to be sung by every vocalist, played by every invented instrument, whistled by every school boy up and down the world. Like *Hamlet*, it is full of delightfully familiar quotations. The most uninitiated opera-goer may attend a performance with perfect confidence in his ability to recognize and enjoy them all.

The first act is divided into two scenes. Before the curtain rises we are prepared for something of gloom and hopelessness by the slow sighing of the orchestra, and are forthwith shown the interior of the study of Dr. Faust, who lived in Frankfort, Germany, in the 16th century. All about are the instruments and paraphernalia of his profession, philosopher and alchemist—glass retorts, scales, mortars, skulls, and disorderly heaps of weighty literature. The venerable doctor himself sits huddled in a chair poring over a book. All his studies are in vain—age cannot be denied or evaded. Death, however, he can command. He pours out a dose of poison for himself and raises it to his lips. At that moment the voices of a group of women going to work in the fields are heard outside his window. He totters over and opens the casement. To his surprise it is dawn—he has spent the whole night in futile meditation. Only slightly distracted by the gay song, he once more takes up the cup, but this time is arrested by the song of the reapers. The lusty young men tramp by, calling to each other in the joy of their physical vigor.

This picture of youth shakes Faust's resolve. He will abandon prayer and philosophy—he will call upon the powers of evil. As he invokes Satan, the eyes of the skull on the table glow. The

lamp flames, the violins flicker with agitation, and the whole orchestra with great excitement changes to another key. Mephistopheles, or the Devil, is prompt in his arrival, appearing in a sulphurous cloud, dressed in a neat suit of scarlet and black, his hoofs shod in modishly pointed shoes, his tail fastened somewhere out of sight, his horns inconspicuous beneath a dashing red cap with a feather in it. Only his pointed ears, his fantastic features, betray his diabolical origin.

He and Faust go over the situation and Faust sings in a fine melody which later becomes a duet, that he desires once again to enjoy all the pleasures of life. Mephistopheles is ready to do business, but his price will be the good doctor's soul. When Faust balks at that his devilish friend tempts him with a vision of a beautiful girl, Marguerite, seen dreaming as she sits spinning to the accompaniment of whirring violins and gentle harpings; and Faust, his elderly imagination inflamed, agrees to the fatal bond. As he signs the parchment the pen strikes sparks, and he eagerly clutches and drains the cup which Mephistopheles gives him. In a moment his beard, his gray locks, his dark cloak are whisked away and he stands before us in all the impressive youth and stature that the leading tenor of the opera has at his disposal. Demanding pleasure, in a triumphant tone, he goes out, followed by Mephistopheles, who joins his sinister voice to Faust's.

Scene 2. This is the village green in the midst of a *Kermesse*, or festival, held in honor of the soldiers about to depart for the wars. Every member of the community appears on the stage at one time or another, but at first it is given over to an interesting series of six choruses, merged into one at the beginning and the end. Students chant of wine and beer, soldiers comment on sieges to hearts and castles, old men with squeaking vocal cords proclaim their enjoyment of Sunday, the young women and young men flirt, the matrons make spicy comment, then all join again in the gay stanzas of the drinking song. The effect is indescribably gay and stimulating and the constant going and coming upon the stage, the picturesque and varied costumes, the general movement and merriment, are entrancing.

Valentine, brother to Marguerite and a soldier of serious and virtuous mien, enters, and pausing in the center of public observation, sings a very moving aria to the medal his sister has just hung around his neck to ward off evil. Wagner, another soldier, who has been circulating about since the curtain rose, comes up to say that the hour for marching has about come and suggests one final glass of beer. So they sit, but Valentine does not grow

conspicuously cheered and in reply to Wagner's question, says that he is worried over leaving his lovely sister alone and unprotected. Overhearing these words, Siebel, a callow and very feminine youth, suffering the throes of his first attack of calf-love, offers, with inflation of his rounded chest, to stand between Marguerite and all ill. Wagner, to break the gloom which is descending, begins his "*Song of the Rat*," which is interrupted by the sudden arrival of Mephistopheles, unannounced save for a certain excitement among the stringed instruments.

Mephistopheles is bland, genial, hail-fellow with them all. He likes Wagner's song, but knows a better one which he will sing if they will join in the chorus. All agree, and he begins his famous "*Veau d'or*," a hymn to the Golden Calf, in which Satan, by name, conducts the ceremonies. It has a vigor and a swing which the villagers like, although we detect a diabolical lilt here and there. The singer enjoys it hugely and loses none of the opportunities for fantastic gesticulation. The late Pol Plançon's singing of this ribald song was accomplished with a dash of hobgoblin fire, little short of genius, and always brought down the house.

Valentine is the only one who looks askance at the stranger; the others all accept him as an especially gay and diverting comrade. It is only when he begins to read their palms that they grow suspicious. Death for Wagner in the first skirmish, death for Valentine in a duel! Flowers and women cultivated by the verdant Siebel will wither!

But Mephistopheles is not through yet—this wine he finds poor, he will furnish better. Striking the image of a fat Bacchus astride a barrel, which serves the tavern for a sign, he first makes sparks pour from the spigot, and then a flow of purple wine! The crowds, delighted by this performance, fill their cups merrily, and then the Devil proposes the health of Marguerite. The righteous and circumspect brother cannot stand this public allusion to his sister; he impetuously strikes the wineglass from Mephistopheles' hand, and, to the amazement of all, the spilled wine bursts into flame. Then at last they suspect the origin of their guest, swords are drawn and voices raised, but Mephistopheles calmly draws a magic circle around himself, over which none can pass, and faces them with a leer. The crowds, terrified, begin to pray, but suddenly remembering the crosses of their sword hilts, with one accord they lift these and threaten Monsieur Satan. It is the one sign against which he is powerless. Cringing, fawning, furtive, he shrinks from them as they all pass out in safety, leaving him alone.

He is then joined by a very becurled, perfumed and befurberlowed Faust, who has fairly run riot in selecting his first costume of youth. He is eager to have his promised encounter with the lady of the vision, and Mephistopheles warns him that it will be no easy conquest, for Marguerite is protected by her own purity, but he will do his best, and promises that she will shortly appear.

Now the green is filling again with merry crowds, ready for the *Kermesse*. The Ballet enters in gay short petticoats of red and blue, and twinkle their white stockings in the measures of the famous *Faust Waltz*, while the band plays and the spectators sing. The infatuated Siebel moons about, waiting for Marguerite, and presently she appears, coming from church, with virtue shining upon her forehead. She is a simple and chaste village maiden, and should be costumed as such, although some *prime donne* find it hard to curb their enthusiasm for silks, velvets, and prolonged trains. Her eyes are modestly downcast and she carries a prayer-book. Faust, prompted by his Satanic friend, boldly steps up to her. She is so surprised that she blushes and drops her breviary, but his words are deferential, although unwarranted. May he not accompany her home?

After all the noise and chorusing and dancing on the stage the first clear notes of Marguerite's answer come gratefully pure and clear and quiet. She is not offended at the gorgeous stranger, but very definitely and politely refuses his arm, protesting that she is neither a fine lady nor especially beautiful, and is perfectly able to reach home unaided. She goes coolly and demurely on her way. Faust is disappointed, would follow, but Mephistopheles promises him better things anon, and as the *Kermesse* begins again, the curtain falls.

ACT II. This is the famous Garden Scene, an act so full of luscious melody that even the most callous heart must quicken its beat during its course. The curtain rises on Marguerite's garden and the rear entrance to her little tiled and mullioned cottage. A gate in the center of the garden wall opens and Siebel enters, bent on an errand of love. His idea is extraordinary and worthy of note by young gentlemen on small allowances. He desires to present Marguerite with flowers—what more convenient than to pick them from her own garden where they are ready to hand? But as he touches each blossom it instantly withers, and he remembers the prophecy of the fiendish stranger in the marketplace. To remove the curse he dips his fingers in Marguerite's little holy water font, and thereafter is able, without further diffi-

culty, to select what strikes his fancy. Leaving the nosegay on the doorstep, he sings to the flowers to carry his message to his love, in that famous contralto *Flower Song*. As he finishes, Faust and Mephistopheles enter and Siebel scuttles away like a frightened rabbit.

They have seen Siebel's gift and Faust is chagrined that he did not think of bringing something of the kind himself, but the devil assures him that he will find him a much more interesting gift and goes off to get it. Faust, left alone in these sacred precincts, looks long and lovingly at the thrice happy house which shelters his love, and apostrophizes it in a beautiful *cavatina*, perhaps the high light of the whole opera—"Hail, thou dwelling, chaste and pure!"—ending on high C. The tenor has every right to the tumultuous applause which usually ensues. To fully enjoy this aria one should notice the obligato of the violin which follows the voice so hauntingly.

Mephistopheles now hastens back with an ornate golden jewel-box which he places beside Siebel's flowers. Faust, a few fine feelings yet remaining, rather objects to tempting her in this manner, but the fiend draws him away quickly behind some shrubbery as the gate opens to admit the lady herself. She is still somewhat in a daze from her encounter in the market-place, but she goes at once to hang up her hat and cloak, and having been taught to improve each shining hour, brings her spinning wheel out into the garden and sits down to work. As she unravels the flax she sings an old ballad about the *King of Thule*, the orchestral accompaniment suggesting the pressure of her little foot upon the treadle, and the motion of the wheel. However, even this work does not completely fill her mind; she breaks the thread of her song from time to time to wonder about the handsome stranger and why he accosted her from among all the village maidens. It is plain that he has made his impression. Then her thoughts wander to the departed Valentine, and her loneliness. Looking up, her eyes fall upon Siebel's little bunch of flowers; she greets them with a shrug and a tolerant smile. He is a nice boy, but—here she suddenly sees the casket and is a-thrill over such a discovery. She hesitates about opening a thing which so obviously does not belong to her, but curiosity prevails and she takes a peep. At the amazing sight within she abandons all discretion and with a trill of wonder and delight begins to deck herself with the marvelous jewels. The thoughtful Mephistopheles has even included a mirror so that Marguerite can admire herself and laugh to see herself so magnificent. Her jubilation is known as the *Jewel Song*, and is a

pièce de résistance in the repertory of every soprano with any aspirations at all.

In the midst of her excitement, Martha, a fat and garrulous neighbor, the only comedy bit in the opera, enters and is agog over the jewels. Surely the gorgeous gentleman who spoke to her in the square must be the donor. Marguerite should not think of refusing them—such things do not happen every day! Marguerite is not so easily convinced, however, and begins hastily to remove the glittering things as Faust and Mephistopheles enter. The latter at once attaches himself to Martha in order to leave the coast clear for the young lovers, who proceed to make each other's acquaintance without delay. The two couples wander in turn about the paths of the garden. Martha is coy and silly, and Mephistopheles leads her on to a shocking flirtation, but the others are lyrical as they talk of Marguerite's simple and uneventful life story. Once, while they are off the scene, Siebel enters eagerly, but is told by Martha that he is *de trop* and goes off tremblingly when Mephistopheles bends a demoniacal eye upon him. Martha at last goes home and Satan, left alone, seeks to precipitate matters by an incantation or two. In this beautiful and weird *Invocation* he bewitches the garden with love magic, and the flowers glow faintly with a mystical light. All the perfumes of the night shall combine to intoxicate the two lovers who are now approaching.

Mephistopheles makes himself invisible that he may watch them. Dreamily they seat themselves and Faust begins the great *Love Duet* by leaning closer and asking to look into her eyes. She repeats the gracious melody, together they play with it, prolong it. Then she breaks off in girlish caprice. In the grass she sees a daisy shining. She will put her lover to the immortal test, "He loves me—he loves me not." Nervously she plucks the petals, but they come out right. With a joyous cry of "He loves me!" she falls into his arms. They continue the love music in the second part of the duet, "*Oh, Night of Love*," in which we hear echoing suggestions of the music which accompanied Faust's first vision of her.

"The hour grows late," sings Marguerite. Her lover must leave her. So with slow and lingering embraces she withdraws into the house. Faust starts to go, but Mephistopheles appears with the suggestion that the best is yet to come; that he must wait and hear what she will tell to the stars. So they hide in the shadows, and sure enough, slowly the little diamond-paned window opens and Marguerite leans out upon the casement in the moonlight.

The innocent girl is too rapturous to sleep. She sings the full flood of her passion to the moon. Warm human ears are listening, however. Now nothing can restrain Faust, who leaps up the steps to her arms. The curtain slowly falls as diabolical laughter echoes from the scarlet gentleman just going through the gate.

ACT III. As *Faust* is a very long opera indeed, and the next scene is almost always cut, a few words will cover it. In Marguerite's home she is spinning with increasing despair, awaiting the return of Faust, who is the father of her child, and who is presumably off philandering. In the course of the scene she is visited by the faithful Siebel, breathing fire and offering his puny strength as her avenger; also by Martha, who brings the news of Valentine's return. The scene terminates by Marguerite's departure for church.

In the village street before Marguerite's dwelling, the act proper begins. A march is heard and great excitement prevails over the return of the soldiers we bade farewell to in ACT I. Various groups wander in and Valentine, battle-scarred and weary, is seeking his own home as rapidly as possible, when he is intercepted by Siebel, who, with much reticence, tries to break the shocking news about Marguerite; but the famous *Soldiers' March*, with all its *bravura* and din, breaks in, and he goes into the house. The soldiers march and countermarch, the townspeople cheer, and we in the audience are warmed by the glorification of a "tune" we have hummed and whistled all our lives.

When this excitement is over, daylight begins to wane, and Faust, with his unhealthy friend, Mephistopheles, approaches Marguerite's house with intent to serenade. But this time no respectful salutations or pure high C's. The Devil himself contributes this performance, and the burden of his song is insinuating, objectionable, insulting, but musically of a piquant drollness that is a delight. His mocking laugh which concludes each stanza sends a creep up our spines and brings Valentine in a perfect fury from the house, with drawn sword. The serenade has reached the wrong ears and Valentine is determined to exterminate his sister's betrayer on the spot, quite ignoring the real cause of all the trouble, except to smash his guitar in passing.

Valentine, in his rage, has imprudently flung off the amulet his sister gave him, so that when he and Faust engage in the duel, he is unprotected from the devilish assistance behind the other's blade. After the orchestra has emphasized four sword thrusts, Valentine falls mortally wounded. The Devil promptly spirits the

victor away, as neighbors, including Siebel and Martha, gather about Valentine, and Marguerite, coming innocently from church, has to push her way through to her dying brother's side. She arrives just in time for him to recognize and curse her with his last breath. With a dreadful cry she swoons in the arms of young Siebel, whose loyal boy-heart keeps him always near her. The crowd, overwhelmed by the tragedy before them, sink to their knees in prayer as the curtain falls amid a murmur of horror and foreboding in the orchestra.

The next scene shows the interior of the church where Marguerite is wont to go daily to pray away her sorrows, but of late even here she cannot find sanctuary from the tortures of her heart. The organ plays largely through this scene, and the music has an undercurrent of Gregorian intervals and pious usage. Poor Marguerite is praying apart from other devotees, an outcast from her kind. She is pale, haggard, distraught. Vainly she tries to fix her mind on her petitions. Everywhere she looks, the horrid, scarlet figure of Satan mocks her. From the niches, from the windows, from the stone pillars themselves his wicked face leers at her. He mocks her and calls to her to listen to the chorus of demons who are chanting her fate. Trembling, beside herself, she stops her ears and tries to join the devotions going on in the body of the church, but her strength is almost gone. Finally after Mephistopheles has hurled his most thundering denunciation she rallies with superhuman effort and, raising her lovely voice, carries her spirit away from his power in the words of the age-old *Dies Irae*, the music of which now fills the stage. Satan disappears in disgust and a stench of sulphur, with one last threat, and the notes of the organ bring the scene to a close.

ACT IV. The fifth act, as written, and as presented in France but rarely in America, begins with what is known as the *Wal-purgis Night*, or the *Witches' Sabbath*, a wild *bacchanale* and series of choruses and ballets of barbaric and semiclassic detail, depicting incidents occurring on the wanderings of Faust and Mephistopheles on pleasure bent, in the midst of which splendors and revels Faust is seized with nostalgia and a desire to see the frail and fallen maiden left behind in Frankfort.

The scene changes to a prison cell, which is the only portion of the act we are accustomed to seeing. The tragedy has now reached its most sordid and lowest level. Poor Marguerite, deserted and outcast, distracted and bereft of reason, has murdered her little baby and has been put in chains to await execution. We find her

lying in pitiful condition upon a wooden bed, chained to a stake, unkempt, in rags, with straws in her tangled hair which was once so decorously plaited. Faust and Mephistopheles enter and her lover softly calls her name. Somewhere in her distraught mind this awakens memories. Delicately the orchestra conjures up her first meeting, the music of the *Kermesse*, the confession of her love, the passionate duet in the garden. As her mind wanders she smiles with pitiful, twisted features. Mephistopheles and Faust would claim her soul and take her with them—the neighing and stamping of their waiting horses can plainly be heard upon the instruments—but Marguerite will use her dying strength to combat them, for she now recognizes with clear eyes the Devil and all his works.

She begins falteringly a prayer to the bright angels above to lean down and gather up her penitent soul to their bosoms, and as her voice rises higher and higher in the exultation of her great supplication, we hear the theme of the grand *finale*, the famous last *Trio*. Faust and the Devil seek to stop her. They argue, they plead, they threaten, but they make no more impression on her soaring spirit than do their words on the glory of her victorious voice. Up and up fly her clear, exultant notes, almost to the gate of heaven itself, while we hold our breath and clutch our chairs with the sheer glory of it. So she triumphs and goes to Heaven, and Faust to Hell, as he so richly deserves. Some stage managers offer us white-clad angels with wings and trumpets pendent over the dying heroine and Faust disappearing through a trapdoor with fire and brimstone, but the wise ones drop the curtain on that last gorgeous flood of song and let the heavenly hosts exult invisibly.

NOTE: No story of Boito's opera, *Mefistofele*, has been included in this series, for lack of space, but in its essentials it follows the story of *Faust*, and its few variations, after a reading of this present outline, will not prove bewildering.

FIDELIO

By LUDWIG VON BEETHOVEN

First Produced in Completed Form in Vienna, 1814

To all deeply earnest musicians and lovers of music, Beethoven is almost a god, so it is not strange that his one opera, *Fidelio*, should be regarded by them with an emotional reverence which approaches veneration. It has, besides, been named the "perfect work for the lyric stage" by wise and sincere commentators, and as such the amateur opera-goer must learn to consider it. He must expect, nevertheless, discouragement at the outset from such of his unfortunate acquaintances who have happened on a performance some evening without knowing anything about the opera beforehand, and who were fondly hoping for something in the nature of *Aïda* or *La Bohème*. Beethoven chose as his theme the purest and rarest of human experiences, the consecrated devotion of husband and wife, and on these exalted premises has built up a score that is beautifully consistent to the ideal throughout and makes no compromise with a temptation to play for popularity among any but those who understand.

The opera has only two acts, but is rich in a multitude of overtures from which to choose. The "Leonoras," 1, 2 and 3, and the "Fidelio" are written for various revisions of the score, but we need only concern ourselves with the last, which is usually presented in its proper place, and the Number 3, which is really the most beautiful and famous, and the true essence of the opera story. The latter is usually played between ACTS I and II, but is also heard the length and breadth of the land wherever a symphony orchestra is gathered together.

The scene opens on the courtyard of the prison adjoining a fortress in Seville governed at some time in the eighteenth century by an unprincipled person named Pizarro. At the back is a high wall enticingly topped by the waving branches of the forest, and pierced by a wicket gate. At the right is the porch and entrance to the jailer's lodge, and to the left we see the sinister en-

trances to some of the cells, with their heavy numbered doors and their little iron gratings.

Marzelline, a spontaneous and delightful young creature, daughter of the jailer, has brought her ironing out on the porch so that she may enjoy the spring air as she works, and Jacquinto, the porter, has seized what he supposed to be a favorable moment to woo her affections. He is an uncouth fellow but good and kind and the young lady was not at all averse to his attentions before her father's new helper, Fidelio, arrived on the scene. Now, however, this drooping, romantic, delicate youth has taken possession of her fancy and she will have none of Jacquinto's love-making, and shoos him off vivaciously. Vigorous knocking at the gate also interferes with Jacquinto's self-expression and during one of his absences Marzelline sings a *romanza* of fond imagining wherein she sees herself, with her father's blessing, united to Fidelio. A cheerful chord in C will be noted at the end of each verse, bright, matter-of-fact, optimistic, like the girl herself. Rokko, the jailer, who preëmpted the services of Jacquinto, now comes in with him, bringing a load of tools and implements, and inquires anxiously if Fidelio has not yet arrived. The letters which he has gone after should not be so long on their way to Pizarro. Almost immediately there is a gentle knock at the gate, and to Marzelline's joy the youth appears. He is a comely young man of soft and womanish contour, with a soprano voice and we know, because the program has told us so, that "he" is really the virtuous Leonora, wife of one of the most abused prisoners in the dungeons, Florestan, personal enemy of Pizarro. Leonora has entered this service as jailer's assistant for the sole purpose, of course, of seeing and communicating with her husband, but up to the present time has not been successful. She comes through the gate, obviously very tired, and finding the things she carries far too heavy.

The sprightly Marzelline is quick to notice the young "man's" exhaustion and flutters about him maternally, wiping his face and taking his bundles from him, while Rokko, touched by what he considers the romantic beginnings of a very nice match for his daughter, is assiduous in helping them. Jacquinto, eaten by jealousy, retires into his lodge like a surly dog. Papa Rokko is delighted with the painstaking account which Fidelio renders and in a pleasant aside asserts that doubtless the lad is trying to make a good impression on his future father-in-law, and promises him, with a sly wink, that he will have his reward. Very naturally poor Fidelio-Leonora is extremely embarrassed, her situation is nothing

if not involved, but she plays up as best she can and Papa is now perfectly sure that his theory is correct. Getting contentedly down to work, he examines carefully the fetters which Fidelio has brought back from the forge. His daughter, her fond eye resting upon her favorite, begins her share of the great quartet, "*Mir ist's so wunderbar!*" in "canon" which is now due. "Canon" is merely an interesting but little used musical form in which all the parts use the same theme, varied by what is known as counterpoint, and contrasted only in the different emotions and voices of the singers. Marzelline's cheerfulness, Jacquinto's jealousy, Fidelio's confusion, and Rokko's paternal amiability—we have them all wonderfully expressed, in the classic strength of this splendid number.

When it is over, the porter goes off again to his lodge, and the beaming parent promises his ebullient daughter that he will put no obstacle in the way of this union, although he is not so keen for marriages without cash to sustain them. For their edification he sings a delightful ballad which asserts that nothing added to nothing makes very little indeed. Fidelio, by this time, is finding himself in a hole which seems to grow deeper by the minute, and so tries to change the subject by begging to be allowed to help look after the prisoners. Rokko, looking into the lad's sensitive face, thinks that some of the sights down in the lowest dungeons would affect him too unpleasantly, but as Fidelio squares his shapely shoulders and resents the implication of weakness, he consents and a trio follows in which Rokko says philosophically that the boy will get hardened in time. Marzelline doubts it, and Leonora tells herself that love will have to be her strength. During the singing of these sentiments the music for the first time becomes serious and portentous, with a hint of the stern purpose of this noble woman.

Rokko, taking Fidelio's dispatch box, retires with his daughter into the house just as the beginning of a pompous march is heard and the great gates are flung wide to admit Don Pizarro, the villain. He sends his guards to places of vantage, apparently always looking for trouble, and reads some of the letters which Rokko brings him on the run. One in particular seems upsetting. Some friend has sent him a warning that state prisons are in the process of examination for victims unjustly condemned on private vengeance, and the Prime Minister, Don Fernando, will probably call at his guilty door. Pizarro, in his agitation, gives voice to an aria expressive of his concern over the trend affairs have taken. It would be an evil day for him, indeed, should the inspector chance on a

certain Florestan, now languishing in the bowels of the earth to satisfy Pizarro's personal animosity. Something drastic will have to be done at once, so dismissing his guards, who have been chorus-ing some comment upon his contemplated action, he calls the jailer to him and tells him quite frankly that Florestan must be done away with. The kindly soul balks at murder, and the most that he will promise is to dig a grave down in the old cistern beside the fatal cell, so that when Pizarro does the deed everything will be conveniently arranged. Rokko thinks that, as a matter of fact, the murder, although perhaps a little brutal, will be a happy release for the wretched captive, and follows his master off into the garden.

Poor Fidelio, who has been within earshot all this time and has missed none of the gruesome details, now rushes on in a distraught condition. She recognized Pizarro, her husband's enemy, but happily he hardly looked at her, and although nothing could be blacker than the present aspect of affairs, she feels an inexplicable ray of optimism, like a rainbow among clouds. She sings the word "rainbow" and the orchestra amplifies and illumines it—a ray of musical sunlight pierces the gloom with benign effect. Standing there with her heart in despair, but her soul uplifted in some mystical vision, she sings her aria to hope and tells us herself, in the following *Allegro* movement, of her identity and her reason for her masquerade. It is the only great solo which the opera grants her, but if she had no other note to sing, Leonora would still be a rôle which is like a crown of glory to any sincere artist who attempts it.

Having sung from the passionate depths of her noble nature, this admirable woman now forgets her own troubles in a suggestion for the amelioration of others'. To Rokko, who is a bit disturbed over the bickerings of his daughter and old Jacquinto, she turns and begs that the prisoners be allowed to come up for a little of the lovely summer air and sunlight. Rokko, beaming on such a worthy idea, releases the prisoners from the upper cells, and there stumbles out on the stage a pitiful procession of broken, emaciated, pallid creatures, who drink in the air like drowning men, and sing with a happiness which clutches at the heartstrings of all of us who breathe the winds of heaven and look at trees and grass as a matter of course every day. While the poor things wander about, eagerly touching the flowers and shrubs, Rokko comes over to Fidelio and tells him that at last he is to have the chance he has asked, and be allowed to see some of the worst cases—that he is in fact detailed to dig with him a grave in the

lowest depths that night. Leonora's wifely heart gives a great bound at this, for no matter how tragic and desperate the circumstances, only to reassure herself by one ardent look that the mysterious prisoner is her husband, and to perhaps hear his dear voice, is worth all the pains she has and will have undergone.

As she agrees ardently to accompany Rokko, Marzelline and the porter rush in with breathless excitement to say that Pizarro, enraged by any demonstration of humanity under his régime, is on his way to punish whoever let the prisoners out to breathe. Sure enough, on a burst of instrumental fury, the commander struts in, and the poor captives are herded up and driven into their holes like sheep, pitifully turning for one last glimpse of the sun before they totter off, and singing a sorrowful chant of farewell to the light. All the characters join in the *finale*, each voicing what is uppermost in his heart. Rage, pity, hope, impatience, and shame mingle together in a splendor of harmonious inharmony as the curtain falls.

ACT II. You will probably have listened during the *entr'acte* to the *Number 3 Leonora Overture*, and so your mood should be in accord with all that Beethoven thought and wished us to feel about the stirring events now to follow. In this act we have descended into the dark and slimy depths of the nethermost dungeon of Pizarro's prison, and here we see, or rather hear, the captive Florestan bemoaning the eternal darkness and trying to maintain his sanity by singing his recollections of spring and of his own youth. The poor fellow becomes a trifle overexcited by his memories and emotions, and at the end fancies that he sees his wife in the guise of an angel, leaning down to him. Having had no food worth mentioning for many months, and being doubtless anemic, the excitement proves too much for him and he falls exhausted to the ground.

Now a little door at the back opens and throws a feeble light into the gloom of the vault, as Rokko, followed by the tremulous Fidelio, comes in. Groping about with their tools, they set to work finally upon their doleful task, talking together in short whispering phrases about the dank air, and all the other unpleasantnesses of the moment, while the orchestra depicts for us what they are doing. We hear quite plainly the crunching of the shovels, the rolling stones, the thud of the loosening earth. The gruesomeness of the whole proceeding soon works upon Leonora's nerves so, that straightening up and singing in a brave, broad phrase, she declares that she intends to save the unfortunate man;

whether it is her husband or not. Rokko tells her to go on working, that Pizarro will be here any minute and the devil to pay if things are not ready. To help his own exertions, he takes a long drink, and Fidelio, looking earnestly toward the prisoner, observes a slight movement. "He is awake!" she cries excitedly, and tries to make out his features, but old Rokko pulls her back to the hole and tells her to scrape away the earth from the cistern. With much trembling distaste she obeys. Just then Florestan speaks to the jailer and recognizing her husband's voice she topples over in most unmanly fashion in a dead faint.

A short dialogue follows between Rokko and the captive, in which he learns the worst, and is told that he is in the power of Don Pizarro, his deadliest enemy. Realizing that this can only mean the end, he urges Rokko to send immediately for his wife, Leonora; and she, poor lady, just recovering, sings desolately that his wife even now digs his grave. She induces the jailer to let her give the condemned man the remainder of the bottle of wine, and some bread she has in her pocket, and watches with wildly beating heart while he eats it, not daring to betray her identity lest it may unnerve him.

Suddenly Rokko gives a shrill whistle.

"Is that my death signal?" asks Florestan, wearily.

In a moment Pizarro has entered, shrouded in a great cloak.

"Everything is all ready," says Rokko obsequiously. "Shall I take off his chains?"

But Pizarro has no time to stop for the unnecessaries; he throws back his cloak, pulls out his dagger and advances upon poor Florestan, announcing his name and his intentions in a voice of unseemly exultation. Fidelio, who has been lurking about in the background, suddenly throws herself before the defenseless prisoner. "First you will have to kill his wife!" she cries, to the great astonishment of every one. Pizarro, annoyed at this interference, draws out his sword and pushes her away—only to be confronted by the disconcerting sight of a pistol held against his ribs. The resourceful woman has him at her mercy, but at the critical moment suddenly there blares forth the clear note of a trumpet. Pizarro's scouts upon the battlements are warning of the Minister's approach. An instant of silence, then a short and melodious sigh of grateful relief from the orchestra.

Once more the trumpet blares. The sentry was a little slow with his warning, for before anything can be done, in comes Jacquinto, breathlessly announcing the Prime Minister to be waiting above. Pizarro looks about for an avenue of escape, but naturally

there is none, and after raging through his part of the ensuing quartet, goes fearsomely up the stairs followed by the emotional Rokko who, quite overcome by the thrilling romance he has discovered right under his nose, stops a moment to join the hands of the united pair and piously points toward heaven. Florestan and Leonora, left alone, sing a rapturous duet, as perfect and pure in its musical elements as the inspiring passion of their sorely tried hearts.

The epilogue is brief and satisfactory. Once more it is the courtyard and we have Don Fernando in all his magnificence, with his retinue of troops entering to the strains of martial music. Pizarro is there, trying to look unconcerned; Marzelline and Jacquinto bring out the state prisoners, while the courtyard fills with curious and excited villagers. Fernando is graciousness and clemency itself and in reply to a complimentary chorus sung by the people, sets all the captives free. "I was really foolish to worry!" thinks Pizarro, when all of a sudden the jailer and Fidelio enter supporting the weak but happy Florestan. Don Fernando is perfectly delighted, for Florestan is an old friend whom he has believed dead. After the salutations are over, he listens with rising indignation to the touching story which Rokko now unfolds. While the people sing their approval of the devoted wife, the Minister, with charming tact, asks Fidelio to unlock the heavy fetters which bind Florestan. The two lovers rush madly into each other's arms, the people sing a massive and beautiful hymn in praise of connubial love, and the curtain falls amid general rejoicing, leaving us in doubt only as to the form of retribution overtaking the wicked Pizarro.

DER FREISCHÜTZ

By CARL MARIA VON WEBER

First Sung in Berlin, 1821

IT is very difficult to translate the word *Freischütz*. *Free Shot* does not in any way approximate the meaning, and *The Magic Bullet* would probably come nearer, if permitted. But what matter the title, if the contents interest us? It is a sweet, naïve, fragrant old opera, this most popular of Weber's works, as simple and spontaneous as the folk-lore from which sprang the tale, and fresh and melodious as the songs of the peasants and the music of the forest birds. It is delightfully fantastic, whimsically impossible, and the nicest sort of entertainment for the very young person who likes hobgoblins and miscellaneous magic. Much of the music is familiar, the opera-goer will be surprised and pleased to discover, and is varied by the occasional spoken word and the droll and classic *recitativo secco* which always sounds so odd to modern ears.

ACT I opens in a small Bavarian village where a "*Schützen-fest*" has been taking place, in which Max, our hero, has been ignominiously defeated. When the curtain rises we can see him obviously sulking in his chair before a consoling mug of beer, while all the people gather around a gentleman named Kilian, who has just had the good fortune to hit the bull's eye. He is not a modest man, this Kilian, and in reply to the people's appreciation, he adds a few tuneful words of acclaim for his own prowess, and with questionable sporting instinct, taunts and derides his unsuccessful competitor. There is more in this than meets the eye, for to-day's events have been rather in the nature of a dress-rehearsal, the real excitement coming to-morrow when Prince Ottokar is to lend his august presence to the occasion. If Max continues to make such a poor showing, his chances of promotion incident to victory are practically *nil*. And promotion to "hereditary forester" is the one qualification necessary to make him an acceptable suitor for the hand of Agathe, daughter of Cuno, his employer.

The latter, Prince Ottokar's Forester-in-Chief, with his lieutenant, Kaspar, First Huntsman, now enter, and rebuke Max's sullen exhibition of temper and resentment against Kilian. Cuno really likes his prospective son-in-law and wants to see him win, so urges him to keep his head and wits about him. Kaspar, however, tells him to call on "The Black Huntsman"—a hint which we immediately perceive is in bad taste and quite out of the question. Cuno, with hardly any urging at all, is now induced to tell us at length the history and meaning of these solemn annual "shoots," but Max, who has probably heard it many times, spends his vocal force in lamentations over his probable fate and his despair of ever winning the lovely Agathe. Presently the villagers, having listened to enough conversation, burst into song, and soon whirl off in the revolutions of a waltz. Max is left alone long enough to sing a recitative and aria about what he used to do when in the prime of form. He is almost immediately interrupted by an enormous and rather terrifying person dressed like a hunter, but strongly resembling his Satanic Majesty. This is Samiel, but we suspect the name is an alias, for even the sight of his shadow on the grass frightens Max into calling upon God, whereat the apparition promptly retreats into the shrubbery. We feel that the creature is here for no good.

Now the dark-browed Kaspar arrives on the scene and playing upon Max's discontented frame of mind, hands him a loaded rifle and suggests that he bring down an eagle, the flight of which is discernible to them but not to us. Max laughs at the preposterous idea, but will try anything once, so pulls the trigger, and presto—in a fluff of disordered feathers the bird falls at his feet! Samiel, in the bushes, has observed all this with amusement, and Kaspar has not failed by nods and winks and by-words to let us know that he is in league with the sinister individual. Of course, Max is perfectly delighted with the result of his shot, and when told that the bullet is a magic one, asks only to be led without delay to the source of supply. Nothing is easier or could fit in better with Kaspar's desires. Let the guileless hero meet him in the Wolf's Glen at midnight, and he shall have some especially cast for him. Samiel smiles his approval of this and disappears in a puff of smoke, and Max goes off promising to be on hand at the witching hour, but is just a trifle uneasy, for the reputation of the Wolf's Glen is none too savory.

Kaspar, now left alone, shows himself shamelessly to us in his true colors, and in an excess of vocal enthusiasm, acquaints the shocked audience with his real motive. This is the first step of

his plan to possess the soul of Max, which he evidently needs badly for some important reason. Upon his unworthy rejoicing, the curtain falls.

ACT II carries us to the chaste bedroom of Agathe, where the girl and her very sprightly and entertaining cousin, Aennchen, are talking together as girls will. Aennchen is vicariously thrilled over the romance which will culminate to-morrow, and thinks nothing in the world can be quite so nice as to have a good-looking lover, but Agathe is of heavier type and pessimistic. She is subject to premonitions and forebodings and feels that all is not as it should be. A Hermit whom she visited this afternoon predicted danger even as he gave her an armful of white roses. From the two girls' conversation we gather that this prophecy has already been partially fulfilled, for a portrait of an ancestor took a tumble from its hook awhile back and almost landed on the little bride's head. They try to rehang it on the wall as they sing, and finally the cheery Aennchen, a bit discouraged by her cousin's prolonged depression, goes out to put the roses in water. Agathe opens her windows dreamily, shows us a seductive glimpse of a forest garden in the moonlight, and sings her beautiful aria, "*Leise, leise!*" to relieve her repressions.

Quite appropriately Max arrives, announced by a hunter's horn, probably one of the earliest experiments in "leading motives." There are festive feathers in his hat and Agathe jumps to the conclusion that he won in the trial rounds, so he has the rather painful task of undeceiving her. However, he is justly proud of the eagle feathers and comes into the room in buoyant mood, which quickly changes when he notices a scratch on the forehead of his sweetheart. When he learns that the wound was caused by the dropping of Great Grandfather Cuno's portrait at the exact same hour when he killed his bird—it was seven by the *Glockenspiel*—he scents a sinister coincidence. With some hesitation he announces his intention of visiting the Wolf's Glen at midnight. Both girls are properly impressed. With terrified shrieks and squeaks they beg him not to be so foolhardy, and yet make it plain that they are quite overcome with his bravery. The dark of the moon is the time for him to start, he says mysteriously, very much enjoying their sympathy, and, as at that moment the electrician in the wings hears his cue and turns off the blue borders, Max rushes off on his perilous enterprise and the curtain falls.

The scene changes to the dreaded Glen. This is the most exciting and diverting occasion. It is really a deliciously terrible

place. It is craggy and full of gloom, even the moon looks frightened, and two thunderstorms meeting overhead contest the right of way. On the stage are circles of dark, evil-looking trees, on the branches of which sit enormous owls with big shining eyes, ravens, vultures and other unpleasant birds. Nearby is a stump weirdly phosphorescent. In the foreground we recognize Kaspar, working very hard in his shirt sleeves, arranging black stones in a semicircle and setting up his magic crucible and his materials. Everything is so utterly sinister in aspect that the strings in the orchestra begin to tremble and presently we hear a hidden chorus of demons chanting something disagreeable about Agathe's fate. Suddenly midnight strikes, and everything changes to a yet more terrifying key. Kaspar at once invokes Satan in a way all his own, and just as we suspected in the first place, Samiel, the Black Huntsman, appears. He comes on in a magnificent rumble and crash, right through the center of an apparently solid rock. Kaspar proceeds to strike a bargain with him. The soul of Max in exchange for three years' respite on earth for him, Kaspar, whose glass we learn is almost run. Samiel agrees and consents to allow seven bullets to be cast, six for general use as Kaspar sees fit, but the seventh for his own. He darkly hints that he will employ it to kill the bride, just as we hear the horn which announces Max.

He arrives with a great show of bravado, but the owls and strange flora and fauna of the Glen obviously upset him and he goes over to Kaspar to help him build the fire. Kaspar makes fun of the poor boy, and just to instill a little healthy respect, evokes the wraith of Max's mother for a terrifying moment—and for good measure, one of Agathe, meditating suicide. Max bears up fairly well, and so the casting of the bullets begins. The metal seethes and throws out an unhealthy pallor over everything, obscuring the wicked birds and the glowing stump. As Kaspar pours out "One" the moon goes into eclipse, the birds flap their wings delightfully, and curious creatures come off their perches and hop about the circle of the fire. As Kaspar calls each number, "One," "Two," "Three," a lugubrious echo answers his voice and as each bullet hisses into the water the most fantastic of diversions occur—every imaginable knocking, tapping and spirit manifestation, with storms, winds, thunder, and a variety of grotesque visitors crawling and leaping around the stage. Perhaps the most pleasing of all is that which accompanies number "Five." A neighing and stamping, barking and whip-cracking is produced in the orchestra, and suddenly through the air a complete hunting party

of skeletons jogs across the back-drop. "Six" is fairly dreadful, with its earthquakes and wheels of fire; but "Seven" is, of course, the climax. Everything falls about as on a storm-tossed ship. Even Kaspar is thrown over in a corner by the result of his own incantations. Max, screaming with fear, calls on Samiel, and grabs a tree to steady himself, but discovers when the air clears a bit that he is holding on instead to the hand of the Black Huntsman himself, who announces in sepulchral tones, "Here I am!" But he is not here for long. The village chimes strike one, and all the devils great and small vanish promptly. Kaspar, utterly exhausted, lies face downward on the ground, and Max gives way to hysteria and nervous collapse as the curtain falls.

ACT III. We are back in Agathe's room, where the bride, arrayed in her white gown and wreath for the festivities which will end in her wedding with some one, is praying for courage to see it through if luck goes against her. Her aria which follows her prayer is one of the loveliest bits of the score. In a few moments her sad and sentimental musings are broken in upon by the lively Aennchen, who wants to know what the trouble is now. She tries in her light-hearted way to explain an odd dream which Agathe relates, in which she supposed herself a dove at which a hunter shot, but when she dropped to earth it was no dove but some large bird of prey. Aennchen's interpretation is scarcely adequate, Agathe moans on, so the resourceful girl tries to divert her with an amusing anecdote of her aunt and her aunt's dog. It is an ebullient tale, and the music is as mirthful and carefree as the singer.

Now, however, the time has come for the serious business of the day. Agathe's bridesmaids arrive with her veil and their arms full of gifts, and Aennchen, taking the white roses of the Hermit from their vase, twists them into a garland and places them upon her cousin's head. After the conventions have been observed by a *Bridal Chorus*, the little group files out and the curtain falls.

The next and final scene shows us the "bosky dell" in the midst of the forest which has been selected as the theater of the day's events. The huntsmen in their shooting costumes are gathered about singing, for they have had a good day, as we can see by the fine bag reposing in sawdust heaps against the scenery. Prince Ottokar is present, refreshing himself copiously after the day's exertions, and acting the genial host to the members of his party. In the background are Cuno and Max, the latter drooping pensively on his rifle.

The jovial Prince tells his Head Game-keeper that he heartily approves his choice of a son-in-law, and expresses the hope that the young man will measure up to what is expected of him in the contest: he has certainly shown marked ability in the hunt. The fact is that Max, unable to resist the temptation of showing off before the Prince, has used up on the game all six of his private bullets, and now has left only that seventh one, which he shares the use of with Samiel. No wonder he is pensive!

The Prince suddenly looks up and sees a dove on the wing. "Get it for my supper!" he commands the bridegroom, and the unhappy fellow cannot choose but use his one remaining shot. Just as he takes aim, there is a shrill cry, the voice of his beloved Agathe complaining that she is the dove and he must not shoot. She runs on the stage followed by her maids, somewhat to the confusion of our minds and that of Max. Automatically he pulls the trigger, and Agathe promptly swoons; but she is not dead, for the old Hermit, who came in with the wedding procession, showed great presence of mind and shooed the dove off into a tree just at the critical moment. So it happens that Kaspar, who had climbed into that tree as a safe and inconspicuous place from which to observe the results of his nefarious scheming, receives the bullet full in the chest. He drops to earth cursing everything in general with his last expiring breath, just as Samiel appears on the drum's excited announcement and claims his soul.

Agathe now rouses and says, "Where am I?" But her distress is unnoticed by the Prince, who after ordering the body of his late forester removed, turns somewhat impatiently to Max for an explanation of his behavior. Max does not help his cause with the tale of the magic bullets and is meekly bowing his head to receive a sentence of banishment when the amiable Hermit once more saves the situation by the eloquence of his plea for the young lovers. Ottokar is moved to clemency and sympathetic tears, Max and Agathe rejoice in flowing melody and all ends merrily in choral enthusiasm, as the curtain falls.

LA GIOCONDA

By AMILCARE PONCHIELLI

First Produced in Milan, 1876

THE composer of this opera is given credit for being the first Italian to adopt the new ideas which Wagner was so earnestly sponsoring, and endeavors to make his music express and comment upon the drama of his libretto. Although when Verdi caught hold of the idea, he did it a great deal better, still Ponchielli was a courageous man, as are all who endorse innovations, and should be appreciated. *Gioconda* is his best known work, and while it is a story dyed a deep dark purple with the gory intrigue of medieval Venice, it is never uninteresting and dull either dramatically or musically.

ACT I, named "The Lion's Mouth," takes place in the courtyard outside the Doge's Palace, with scenery in detail familiar to all tourists. Even that letter-box slot, called the Lion's Mouth, is there with its invitation to betray anonymously to the Inquisition any acquaintance you may happen to dislike. There is apparently little trouble in the air to-day, however, as the stage is full of people out to enjoy the spring weather and witness the Regatta. Bells are pealing, the people are singing, and the atmosphere is festive in the extreme. Only Barnaba, our villain, looks dour and unpleasant, as he leans against a column watching the passing show.

He is the chief spy of the Inquisitors, and no wonder he is moody, with so much innocent blood upon his head. He shoos the people off to see the beginning of the Regatta, and sings gruesomely that they only dance on their graves, and that he is deep in the web of another intrigue to secure for himself the person of La Gioconda, a ballad singer. He sees her coming at that moment and steps behind his column. Gioconda (we never do know her real name) is leading her old blind mother, La Cieca, to whom she is most devotedly attached. The two sing of their mutual affection, and the invisible Barnaba, from his retreat, joins in his sinister voice with a suggestion or two about his plot.

The trio ended, Gioconda leaves her mother safe beside a little shrine, while she goes off to see if she can get a glimpse of Enzo, a young Genoese sailor, who has lately caught her maiden fancy. Hardly has she gone a step than Barnaba lurches out from behind his pillar to intercept her, but she will have none of his advances, and after a little struggle she manages to get away. Her unwelcome suitor should have been treated more circumspectly, for now nothing can stop him in his evil schemes. So Gioconda is a devoted daughter, is she? Ha! He will work along that line first and see what happens!

The crowds just returning from the Regatta give him an idea. Among them is a surly, disconsolate fellow, one Zuana, the loser of the gondola race. What more easy than to play upon his discontent and persuade him that the old blind Cieca bewitched his oars? The inflammable Zuana seizes eagerly upon the idea, glad of anything which excuses his failure, and in a moment has raised a great hue and cry in which the pleasure-loving populace, ready for a new thrill, join him and urge a speedy burning at the stake for the old lady. Things are looking black and the efforts of the frantic Gioconda, as well as those of Enzo whom she has found and attached, seem utterly useless, when suddenly the Palace doors at the head of the stairway are flung wide and Alvise, Head of the State Inquisition, with Laura his wife, come forth in great dignity and importance. Gioconda at once throws herself at the feet of this great lady, who, inquiring the cause of the commotion, pleads with her august husband to show a little clemency. Although Laura is masked, as was the custom in those days when dames of rank walked abroad in the public eye, her voice causes a great heart-throb in the breast of Enzo, and his emotion does not pass unnoted by the trained eye of Barnaba. The sailor joins his pleas to those of Gioconda and the palpitations he precipitates in Laura's bosom add fuel to the spy's flame of interest. In his official capacity as State Sleuth, Barnaba knows everything, and now, putting two and two together he deduces that Enzo is really a certain Genoese noble by that name who was once betrothed to Laura and who was jilted because this present match was more profitable to her parent. He can be here for no good purpose—the plot thickens!

Alvise greatly loves a fine public gesture, and a graceful yielding to his wife's request in this matter can do no harm. So La Cieca is freed and a purse is even added for good measure. The old woman, who has endured rather a bad quarter of an hour, is quite overcome at this generosity, but realizing that she owes

it all to the fair intercessor, she sings in spite of her years and afflictions, one of the most dramatic and appealing numbers of the score, "*Be it angel's voice or woman's!*" and offers her rosary as a humble gift of gratitude. Laura, touched and a bit superstitious, kneels for the woman's blessing before following her husband from the scene.

On his way to the church door, Alvisè sees Barnaba lurking around and asks lightly, "What luck lately?"

"Nothing much," replies the spy, "but I have a wonderful catch ready to hook!"

La Cieca had asked her generous patroness' name, and when the lovely voice replied, "Laura," Enzo very imprudently gasped, "'Tis she!" So Barnaba, with all the proof he needs, remains when all the others are gone, and confronts Enzo with his real title, Prince of Santafor. Enzo denies and protests and points to his ship in the distance as evidence that he is merely a sea-captain, but Barnaba tells him to save his breath—he not only knows his name, but of his affair with Laura. Enzo is surprised, and the fact being that Laura is and always has been the love of his life and La Gioconda only a passing diversion, he is thrilled at a plan which Barnaba now advances, by which he will arrange to conduct the lady to Enzo's boat that night just in time for them to take advantage of the outgoing tide. Enzo's delight of course takes a melodious form, after which he goes off in delirious expectation.

Now Barnaba explains, in case we may have become slightly confused, that he will entice Laura to the ship for the sole purpose of allowing Gioconda to witness her sweetheart's faithlessness, with the probable result that he, Barnaba, will catch her affections on the rebound. It seems a very elaborate circumlocution to us, but they liked to do things that way in those days, doubtless with a knowing eye to possible opera libretti.

Barnaba, although clever, has neglected one branch of his education: he has to employ the services of a public letter-writer. Now calling loudly for Isepo, a gentleman of that profession, he dictates a letter destined for the Lion's Mouth, in which he informs the Chief Inquisitor that his amiable wife has made plans to elope with a sailor named Enzo. La Gioconda, coming out of church at this moment, hides in the shadow of a pillar and listens to the whole thing. Heartbroken at this news of her lover's philandering, she drags her mother back into the church to pray about it. It is difficult to think what would have happened to the plot had Barnaba known how to write and done so in silence, but having advertised to all within hearing his evil intentions, he

now puts the letter in the fatal aperture and looking up at the colossal and sinister Palace, apostrophizes the building in a fine aria, "*Oh, mighty monument!*" and goes off well satisfied with his day.

To relieve the tension, crowds again fill the square and some of the more frivolous ones, in this case the *corps de ballet*, dance a charming *furlana* while others join in a prayer, the music of which drifts through the church windows. In the midst of this La Gioconda and her mother cross the square. The poor girl evidently found little spiritual consolation, for she is in a pitifully hysterical condition, and a great concern to her old mother, and they sing a duet of mutual sympathy, as the curtain falls.

ACT II is sub-titled "The Rosary" and takes place on the dock beside the *Hecate*, Enzo's picturesque brigantine, which we see in clear detail, moored closely and large as life. A tiny shrine to the Virgin is piously conspicuous on the poop, and several sailors sit about on deck, idly singing a sea-chanty, for some reason using queer little megaphones. Barnaba now passes in a gondola, with his secretary, Isepo, and proceeds stealthily to set the scene for his evil plot, singing the while a merry *barcarolle* in which he depicts the imminent downfall of yet another pretty bird. The sailors call to him and join in his chorus, but quiet down as Captain Enzo comes up from the cabin, carefully dressed and in the best possible spirits. He tells the men to be ready to weigh anchor at midnight, and then observing the moonlit canal, can no longer repress his sentimental emotions, and lingers to salute the scenery in one of the most beautiful and famous of tenor arias, "*Cielo e mar*" ("Sky and sea"), which to hear sung in its proper and romantic setting is worth sitting through twenty acts of operas longer than *Gioconda*.

At the conclusion of his song he notices the sound of oars and recognizes the voice of Barnaba, who has brought Laura. Apparently he had little difficulty in persuading her to this rash act, for the gentle lady had never quite got over her attachment for Enzo, her marriage with Alvisè being one of "convenience," in which she had little to say, and she has no compunction at all in leaving him. To-night was remarkably propitious, as the Inquisitor was absent at one of his gruesome conclaves.

When at last in her true lover's arms, they voice their raptures in a duet of fervor and enthusiasm. Laura may think they are singing a bit too loud, for Enzo stops to assure her there is no danger, they are moored to a deserted island. Then having a

matter or two to see to, he goes below. Laura, her heart still overflowing, falls to her knees before the little Virgin, and prays her thanks, as La Gioconda, appearing from nowhere in particular, suddenly stands forth and shrieks, "Anathema!" Laura, so rudely snatched from her devotions, demands an explanation, which Gioconda is, it seems, here for the purpose of giving. Then begins a truly glorious duet, Gioconda stating that she loves Enzo to distraction and Laura promptly admitting the same state of heart. They proceed to elaborate and contest their separate and contrasted passion for the same enviable man. Gioconda, however, has a means of ending the argument effectively. She lifts a sharp little dagger over Laura's head. Just as she is about to strike, her victim falls on her knees before the shrine and lifts her rosary and she suddenly recognizes the great lady who this afternoon obtained her old mother's pardon. Quickly changing her mind, she calls up the boat which must have brought her here, and hustling the rather dazed and strangely acquiescent Laura into it sends her off with the rather inadequate explanation, "I am La Gioconda!"

Now Barnaba arrives to see how things are progressing, and is not at all pleased to find the noble lady gone and the singer in her place. He signals to the irate Alvisè, who is apparently somewhere up the lagoon on vengeance bent, to pursue the fugitive—and goes off to see the race. Gioconda, left alone, murmurs that she saved Laura, but at terrible cost to her own heart. Her feelings, however, are destined to be still more lacerated, for now Enzo rushes up to take his love once more in his arms, and is distinctly chilled to discover that only La Gioconda is here. She takes great satisfaction in telling him that he is jilted and Laura has gone off with some one else. Enzo will not believe it, he says, but it affects him quite terribly and he decides to die on the spot. Snatching up a torch from a passing sailor he runs hysterically about setting fire to his pretty ship, which burns like tinder and sinks at once, as he cries despairing farewells to Laura, and the desperate Gioconda mutters jealously and resolves to die with him if possible. The descending curtain conceals the immediate outcome.

ACT III. "The House of Gold," takes place in a room in the Golden Palace which is the home of Alvisè and Laura. The agitated husband is here, pacing up and down and giving tongue to his harsh thoughts. Evidently he succeeded last night in overtaking the boat in which Laura was fleeing, for now his mind

is full of nothing but an enormous desire for retaliation against her for his wounded sensibilities. Death is the only suitable reward for her behavior, and this time no uncertain dagger, but poison sure and swift. So saying, he calls in his wife, who comes immediately, a little pale and shaky, but dressed in the bravest attire, doubtless out of sheer bravado. They greet each other with exaggerated courtesy, and Alvise offers her flowery compliments to hide his sinister intent. But this sort of pretense cannot long be kept up; in a moment or two he tears off his velvet glove and shows his fist of steel. In a few well-chosen words he tells her that he is perfectly acquainted with the depths of her perfidy, and that her last hour has even now arrived. To emphasize his words, he seizes her and throws her upon the floor. The poor woman, although prepared for somewhat of a scene, had not expected such extremities, and sobs and pleads desperately for her life. Alvise has no pity; in fact he draws aside a curtain and shows her her own bier already nicely arranged to receive her, inviting her to admire it.

Suddenly there sounds from the lagoon the strains of a serenade, and Alvise, indulging his sense of the dramatic, gives his wife a small phial of poison and tells her that by the time the chorus below has ended he will return expecting to find her quite dead. So saying, he strides away, and who should appear but La Gioconda, who has secreted herself somewhere about, after her uncanny habit, and has also, it appears, been able to foretell exactly what was going to happen, so is prepared for this very emergency. She snatches away the deadly little bottle from Laura's palsied hand, and insists that she drink up the contents of another phial which she had in her pocket—a narcotic warranted to produce the semblance of death only.

Laura naturally hesitates a little, having no special reason to feel any great confidence in this extraordinary woman; but, after all, hers is a limited choice of evils, and as the serenade outside gives evidence of concluding, she shudders and bravely swallows the liquid. La Gioconda efficiently pours out the poison into the empty flask, leaves the drained poison-bottle on the table as evidence, assists the great lady to the convenient bier, and then, as Alvise enters, swiftly goes back to her hiding-place. The unnatural husband sees the empty phial, sniffs it to make sure he is not being duped, peers in reassuringly at the occupied bier, and goes out again, satisfied that he has managed the thing very well. When he has gone out, comes La Gioconda once more, to sing rather broken-heartedly as she gazes upon Laura's inert form that

formerly she made the sacrifice for her mother, but that this time it is for Enzo.

The scene then changes to the ballroom of the Palace where a most elaborate entertainment is in progress, while the noble hostess presumably is dead in the next room. Her stony-hearted spouse receives his guests as if nothing had happened and they, unconscious of tragedy, circulate about, admiring his house and his hospitality. Presently he announces a special treat in store for them, the *Dance of the Hours*, to be performed by the *corps de ballet*. This dance is very famous and is often given apart from the opera; the music is colorful, the opportunity for the display of choreographic art exceptionally fine. Four groups of dancers represent separately the hours of Dawn, Noon, Evening and Midnight and combine in a *finale* of bewildering movement and splendor.

After this excitement, another diversion occurs, but of a different variety. Barnaba enters, dragging with him the trembling old Cieca, who, emulating her extraordinary daughter, has insinuated herself in some way into the Palace, although she explains that she was irresistibly drawn here to pray for some one who was dying. The passing bell from the orchestra emphasizes her words and Alvisè looks a bit uncomfortable. In the meantime, Enzo, who apparently did not perish with his burning ship, has mingled with the crowd, disguised by a mask, but Barnaba's keen eyes can penetrate behind it and coming up beside him he whispers pointedly that the *tolling bell is for Laura!*

The excitable Enzo, continually the victim of rash impulses, now boldly unmask and steps up to the haughty Alvisè and announces in a loud voice that he is Enzo Grimaldo, Prince of Santafior, and perfectly well aware that he is proscribed in the State of Venice, but he merely wishes Alvisè to know who he is, and how he feels. What the hot-headed young man hoped to accomplish by this defiance is hard to tell, but his audacity precipitates a very splendid finale to the act. Alvisè vows that if Enzo escapes, Barnaba shall forfeit his head. La Cieca accuses Barnaba of instigating the whole thing, while the latter announces that his revenge is not yet completed.

Gioconda, again appearing unexplained among them, according to her usual habit, is tortured by melodious pangs of jealousy, but offers herself to Barnaba if the rogue can manage to get Enzo out of this scrape; while all the guests murmur or weep or gasp, according to their dispositions.

Alvisè has one more sensation in store for them. Now he sud-

denly pulls back a tapestry and there lies Laura upon her bier. With a touch of pride the Grand Inquisitor announces: "This is my very own work!"

"Then you are a murderer!" screams the truthful Enzo, but the guards suppress his further sentiments, as the curtain falls.

For the last and fourth act, we have a most extraordinary scene, called: "The Orfano Canal." It is the ruined porch of a villa on the Island of Giudecca, where Gioconda is keeping house in what would seem a rather exposed manner. She has a chair, a table on which repose, in sinister array, a lamp, a dagger, and a phial of poison. She has also a picture of the Virgin and a crucifix, and her bed is modestly screened. Through the porch may be seen the lagoon at the back, and at the right the street comes straight up to the steps. Two men now approach stealthily, carrying between them a heavy burden, wrapped in a cloak, which La Gioconda, admitting them to her airy retreat, directs they shall deposit upon her bed. They take no pay for their strenuous work, for they are singers like herself, and evidently in those days musicians stood by one another. She only begs them to find her old mother, who has been missing ever since the confusion of last night's episode. Promising to do their best, they depart and leave her to her inky thoughts. With mother missing, and lover untrue, Gioconda feels that in suicide lies the only way out of her troubles. Contemplating the deadly articles upon her table, she sings the aria, "*Suicidio*," famous on every concert platform. Perhaps, however, it would be better to use the poison for its original victim, who, she reminds herself, lies yonder in her power. She approaches the bed and turns back a fold of the cloak curiously. The thing would be easy enough, with such a deep lagoon right at hand. Suddenly she hears a gondola passing and a voice asks if there is any news. With gruesome unconcern, some one replies, "A few corpses floating on the canal!"

But this gloom and depression is proving too much for La Gioconda's nerves. With a heart-breaking cry, she throws herself down by the table and sobs for Enzo. Strangely enough, by operatic coincidence, he walks in at this moment, but he is as callous as ever to her sufferings and wishes to know what she wants now. She wants, of course, what he will not give, so consoles herself, as have others before and since, by adding to his unhappiness. When he tells her sadly that he is on his way to weep beside Laura's tomb, she informs him that he will find that tomb empty. Enjoying his anguish, she refuses to explain further and when he threatens her with his dagger, she sweetly insists that

death at his hands would be her greatest happiness. It is hard to say what the result might be, did not Laura choose this exact moment to awaken from her trance. Appropriately, her first murmured word is "Enzo!" and immediately she enters.

At first Enzo thinks he sees a ghost, but a warm human embrace reassures him and the meeting is full of rapture, which Gioconda is unable to endure and covers her face with her cloak. Laura fears that the shrouded figure is Alvisè and wishes to escape precipitately, but as the wretched woman reveals her face Laura falls at her feet in gratitude and tells Enzo the whole story. He is, we hope, a trifle ashamed of himself.

Now from the water is heard a snatch of that same serenade which was to have been Laura's death chant. The softening influence of the music seems to banish all resentment from La Gioconda's mind, and in a burst of generosity she tells the lovers how to escape and even produces a boat for the purpose. Overcome by her magnanimity, and calling down blessings on her head, they hurry off, leaving her free at last to end her troubles. She heroically lifts the poison phial; then decides to live a while longer, and look for her mother. Her preparations for flight are interrupted by the dreadful Barnaba, who remembers her promise last night and has come, after an annoying search, to claim her.

"So this is the way you cheat me!" he exclaims. La Gioconda is terrified. She had forgotten this particular trouble, but playing for time, she agrees to be his, and saying she desires to deck herself in finery for the occasion, goes to the couch and begins to put on some trinkets which are lying about, at the same time picking up a little stiletto. Turning suddenly, she manages a stiff smile. "I am ready," she exclaims, and as he embraces her she puts the knife through her heart.

Barnaba is furious to be thwarted in this inconsiderate manner. "Well, here's a pleasant surprise for you, too!" he hisses. "Listen—last night I had the pleasure of strangling your old mother! Do you hear?"

His words fall on mercifully deaf ears and the curtain falls.

LES HUGUENOTS

By GIACOMO MEYERBEER

First Sung in Paris, 1836

"LES HUGUENOTS" is probably the most important of that school of works which put the "grand" into Grand Opera. So magnificent and splendid is it in its conception, its theme, and its treatment, that for this very reason impresarios are apt to regard it with a feeling of uncertainty unless they have at their command a company of artists of the very first rank: artists who are schooled in the traditions of the "grand manner," and from among whom they can select an all-star cast. Occasionally, however, such miracles do happen and Meyerbeer gets the sort of treatment he demands, and the public gets something to talk about for years, and the box-office gets a gratifying harvest of dollars.

The story of the opera is taken from history and deals with the massacre of St. Bartholomew's. Some one has said that, being a Jew, the composer took great satisfaction in showing up a few of the large blots upon the history of the Christian faith, and it is true that in two of his operas he uses these themes; but it seems a little difficult to credit him with such an ulterior motive, and he probably found that the story provided the largest canvas upon which to paint his rich and colorful effects. At all events, he missed not the smallest incident of the libretto which was capable of sustaining a chorus, a ballet, an ensemble, or a brilliant aria.

ACT I opens on a hall in the château of the Comte de Nevers, in old Touraine. It is still daylight, for through the great window at the back of the stage we can see the stately gardens with their fountains, gravel paths and clipped yews, where some young aristocrats are playing ball. Inside the room a reception is under way, and guests in brilliant costumes are moving about, some of the men indulging in games of one sort or another. The Comte, who is an ardent Catholic, is nevertheless large-minded enough to include among his guests one Huguenot, Raoul de Nangis, for whom, before the young man arrives, he craves the indulgence of the more bigoted in the company. They are none too warm in

their reception, but fortunately the advent of the refreshments somewhat relieves the situation, and all settle down to the pleasant business of drinking, to the tune of a Bacchanalian chorus, "*The joys of the table.*" In order to start things off well, the ingenious host proposes that a series of toasts be offered to "The Ladies," each of which shall be accompanied by an appropriate tale of adventure, and Raoul is asked to commence. He has one on the tip of his tongue, for on his way here he was able to rescue a most delightful lady from the pranks and insults of a party of students, and he describes her charms in the first tenor aria, "*Whiter than the ermine,*" with a dreamy obligato by that sentimental and nearly obsolete instrument, the *viola d'amore*. Raoul unfortunately does not know the name of his beauty in distress, but she thanked him most politely, and now he lives only to see her again.

Hard upon his master's romantic utterances enters Marcel, Raoul's bluff old retainer, who seems somewhat lacking in manners, but aggressively religious. He is a Huguenot, and he wants the world to know it. Because he does not approve of the company in which his master is disporting himself, he bellows forth Meyerbeer's transcription of the old Lutheran hymn, "A mighty fortress is our God." But he cannot make the Catholics mad; they ply him with wine and induce him to sing again. This time he gives a spirited rendering of the Huguenot war-song, "*Piff, Paff, Piff, Paff!*" in the chorus of which the magnanimous company joins.

Now through a window at the back we see a lackey conducting a veiled and mysterious lady to a seat in the garden, where he leaves her and comes bowing in to tell his master that he has a caller. The Comte has left orders that he will not be disturbed when he is having a party, but on learning the sex of his guest, he goes off promptly, quite certain of sympathy and understanding from the other Frenchmen. They lose no time in securing points of vantage at the windows, Raoul among them; but to his extreme horror he sees that the lady is none other than she whom he rescued that morning, the subject of his ballad. Being a conventional young man, he is bitterly disillusioned: no really nice girl goes to call on gentlemen in their gardens, without a chaperone, especially not in those formal days, and he leaps to the desperate conclusion that she and de Nevers have some shady relationship. The Comte's respectful farewell bow as he escorts her out, and his later protestation that it was one of the Queen's ladies come to reject his hand, are not taken seriously by any one, and Raoul's whole evening is spoiled.

Now enters Urbain the page, an effeminate little creature with

a mezzo voice and a distinct charm of his own, originating, we suspect, in the beauty and *esprit* of the young prima donna who assumes his plumes and trappings for the occasion. He sings a nice and justly popular recitative and cavatina beginning, "*Hail, noble Seigneurs!*" and then delivers a letter from the Queen (Marguerite of Valois) to the astonished Raoul. The Catholic lords, recognizing the writing and the crest, are very much impressed and Raoul goes up many pegs in their estimation. The fortunate young man is invited to be blindfolded and led to an unknown tryst, by the hand of the page, Urbain. Every one is pleasantly excited and congratulatory except Marcel, who tries to take the curse off the affair by chanting a *Te Deum*; but Raoul consents and is led away by Urbain and his armed escort.

In the second scene (in the original form ACT I) we discover the terrace of the Château of Chenonceaux, upon which Queen Marguerite is walking with her ladies. It is a lovely bit of *la belle France* which she can see, and she pauses to apostrophize the view in glowing melody, before turning to walk with her favorite lady, Valentine, whom we recognize as the indiscreet visitor in the Comte's garden. A chorus of girls goes down to the winding river for a swim, and Urbain, who has been holding a mirror so that the Queen might admire her own reflection, leaves his post to take a peep at what goes on; but maidens were modest in those days and the Queen recalls the mischievous boy, who comes back disappointed.

Now Raoul is led in and as the bandage over his eyes is removed, the first thing he sees is the lovely face of the Queen. With native tact he bursts into a song of praise and admiration, which impresses her so favorably that she makes it into a duet. They exchange a few delicate pleasantries and it is not until the page obsequiously announces a group of noblemen, that the young man discovers in whose august presence he stands. Properly impressed, he listens to the sovereign behest. It seems that this royal lady feels acute distress at the religious dissension in her fair realm, and has hit upon a superb plan for uniting the opposing factions, in fact, she has set her heart on marrying this hot-headed Protestant youth to the beautiful Catholic, Valentine de St. Bris. Raoul, a little nonplused to have his life thus arranged, nevertheless can see her point, and is willing to give it a trial, in spite of the fact that his father-in-law will be the Comte de St. Bris, a stiff-necked Romanist who is among his favorite enemies. The Queen is delighted, and presents all the nobles to each other with instructions to let bygones be bygones.

All goes well, with even the fiery Marcel half won over, until the lady in the case is brought on in person, when Raoul, recognizing her as she who so shocked his tender sensibilities in de Nevers' garden, refuses to accept her hand. This is a fine state of affairs. Never was lady so affronted nor queen so angry. All singing at once, they express themselves forcefully and with indignation. St. Bris challenges this insolent Huguenot to a duel without delay. Raoul, upset, but showing a bold front, accepts and sticks to his resolution, while the only one at all pleased is Marcel, who cannot control his joyful exuberance.

ACT II takes us to the *Près-aux-clercs*, on the Seine embankment in Paris. In this, the prototype of the modern amusement park, all sorts of innocent gayety is in progress to celebrate the leisure hours of an early Sunday evening in August. The principal local amusement seems to be drinking and music, and in the court-yards of two opposite inns rival religious factions are singing their songs and flinging taunts at each other. The Huguenots seem to have the best of it with their delightful "*Rataplan*" and their imitation of the beating of drums, but the Catholic lads and lasses across the way are fairly able to hold their own.

Suddenly a saintly procession of white-clad virgins winds into the chapel at the rear. Poor Lady Valentine, after her trying experience at Chenonceaux, has changed her mind and decided to marry the Comte de Nevers, and this is the beginning of her bridal procession. Soon she appears with her father and her bridegroom. All the Catholics present kneel respectfully, but Marcel, chancing by at this moment, refuses in his usual hearty manner to even remove his hat, thus furnishing the composer with the needed element in a dramatic ensemble, in which we have the religious chants contrasted with the war songs of the Huguenots and the indignant gibes of the Catholics. It is only through the timely arrival of a large group of terpsichorean gypsies that religious strife is averted. The ballet occupies the stage until sufficient time has elapsed for Valentine and de Nevers to be united in holy wedlock. When this is accomplished they disappear and the witnesses come from the chapel. The bridegroom is among them, having amiably acceded to his bride's rather unusual request that she be left alone awhile in church to think. He will return for her later with the proper ceremony. In the meanwhile old Marcel takes this opportunity to present Papa St. Bris with Raoul's challenge for the evening, and the little group breaks up.

Now night falls with the ringing of the curfew, and the docile

people obey the watchman who goes about with his protecting archer, and wander home, singing a quaint old chant in tune with the bell. Such folk as have no home enter the inns or the church and the place is deserted.

Presently St. Bris and his second, Maurevert, wander out from the chapel, still discussing a plan for the assassination of Raoul when he presents himself for the duel. But they are overheard by Valentine, who has finished thinking in the church and come out for a breath of air. She hides in the porch and when an opportunity arises, very magnanimously, considering her treatment, informs Marcel of the plot for Raoul's extermination. They sing for a few moments of their love for the young Huguenot, and for the first time we discover that Valentine's affections are seriously involved, and that she cannot regard her recent marriage to de Nevers with much enthusiasm.

Now the principals in the duel foregather, and Marcel manages to whisper a warning in his master's ear. But the fiery young man is all absorbed in the immediate job ahead, and begins a declamation of emotional intensity and martial fervor addressed to his opponent. The ground is measured and other formalities attended to, and just as the swords are crossed, Maurevert arrives with his assassins. The Huguenots, gaily singing their "*Rataplan*," rush from the Inn to protect their man, and the Catholics are reinforced by some students from the opposite stronghold. A fine mêlée, both vocal and pictorial, ensues, only quelled by the magnificent entrance of Queen Marguerite on horseback, says the book—but she usually prefers to walk—with the assiduous Urbain well to the fore, urging less noise and more respect. Her Majesty, her eye lighting on some of her most prominent subjects, demands an explanation, and Marcel, in his crude way, drags Valentine from her hiding-place and declares, "Here is the lady that started the whole thing!" St. Bris is annoyed to discover that once more his daughter has made herself conspicuous, and rebukes her without regard for the publicity of the occasion, but the Queen, convinced that the time has come to straighten out the matter, takes this opportunity to inform Raoul that Valentine's garden call upon the Comte de Nevers was to break her engagement with him. Raoul is, of course, overcome by the injustice of his own misguided behavior, but St. Bris replies that nothing makes any difference now, for the matrimonial knot has been tied.

To confirm his words, the Comte now approaches upon the river, riding in the most magnificent of barges, which contains among other luxuries, its own little orchestra. He steps on shore,

looking very spruce and festive indeed, and taking his reluctant bride by the hand, leads her to the *quai*. By this time all the citizens in Paris are trying to see what is going on and the stage is crowded with every member of chorus, ballet and a perfect army of supers, conscientiously impersonating a rich diversity of inhabitants. A bridal *chorale* is sung, but the general atmosphere is still one of friction between the various factions. The Queen attempts to comfort Raoul, but with little success, so rides away in state, bringing the elaborate *finale* to a close and the curtain down.

ACT III shows a truly palatial apartment in the house of de Nevers. It is furnished with the usual operatic sparsity, but there are portraits, tapestries, a large fireplace, and the necessary secret door. As Valentine, drooping beside the big window, sings plaintively of her distressing situation, Raoul enters with superb indifference to consequences. Valentine, aghast at his imprudence, begs him to fly at once, but only succeeds in inducing him to hide, as her husband, her father and other Catholic lords enter, bent upon some weighty and absorbing matter. St. Bris wishes his ubiquitous daughter to retire, but the indulgent husband permits her to stay and thus she witnesses the most stirring scene in the opera, the "benediction of the swords," an impressive incident, both musically and dramatically, which will long be remembered by any one privileged to hear it well rendered. St. Bris is a severe old gentleman, but in the hands of a competent artist the rôle can acquire a distinct appeal of dignity and fanatical devotion to a cause, which counteracts all its apparent hardness.

The plot for the extermination of all Huguenots unfortunate enough to be passing that night in the confines of Paris is thus launched and consecrated, but de Nevers, always the soft-hearted compromiser, breaks his sword rather than take part in such a bloody performance, and is promptly arrested and removed. Now the details of the plan are given by St. Bris, with the familiar information that the bell of St. Germain is to be the signal. Monks enter with white scarves, which tied upon the arms of the loyalists, will prevent any fatal errors in the dark. Valentine, staring wide-eyed, manages a brief prayer to Heaven to look after Raoul, before the great climax of the scene is introduced. In a tremendous choral number which increases to a peak of ferocity, the weapons are blessed, the nobles seize them with the crossed hilts uppermost and sing to the accompaniment of a most excitable drum and cymbals, until they have worked themselves up to a pitch calculated to inspire the bloody deeds ahead of them. As things quiet down,

they depart, and Raoul comes out from behind his tapestry. It is of the utmost importance for him to escape immediately, for having overheard all this, his warning may save many lives, but in some way the doors have become locked except that extremely unpracticable exit which has just closed on the conspirators. Valentine naturally clings as hard as she can, to prevent his departure; all the rest of the Huguenots in the world are of less importance to her than this one she loves and at such a moment she admits it openly. Raoul, although in a dreadful hurry, pauses at this bit of gratifying information, to add his vocal admiration to hers, and to propound the brilliant idea that she plan to escape with him, as soon as practicable. At this delirious moment a sinister reverberation smites our ears. It is the tocsin of St. Germain and the massacre has begun! Raoul forgets everything in the immediate need for action, and tearing himself from the arms of his fainting Valentine, leaps grandly through the window as the curtain falls.

The opera usually stops here and we naturally infer that Raoul perished, for as the curtain came down we heard a good deal of shooting. The opera has been very fine, and crowded with incident and enjoyment, but this is its logical termination and it has been long. However, the zealous composer gave it still another act, which some ardent impresarios insist on presenting, and for their patrons here is a little sketch of the events which transpire:

Raoul does not perish after all, but gets safely through the street barrage and bursts in upon an elaborate entertainment staged in the ballroom of the Hôtel de Nesle. His unceremonious entrance and wild and bloody appearance are very alarming. His cry of warning interrupts a gay gavotte and all the brave gentlemen leave their fainting partners and dash out with drawn swords. The scene changes to the cemetery of a Huguenot church, which has been considerably battered in the late excitement. The enclosure is full of all sorts of miserable, frightened people who have fled here for sanctuary. Marcel, wounded, is looking about for Raoul, and presently he arrives, and shortly after Valentine rushes in with a white scarf for him to wear, but he scorns such protection. However, when Marcel reports that poor, kind-hearted de Nevers has been killed, Valentine wants to marry again immediately, and Raoul, although he thinks that she takes rather a risk in wedding a proscribed Huguenot, consents to let Marcel perform the ceremony, which he does then and there, to the tune of a grave old hymn. No sooner is this accomplished than the

attack on the church begins, and amid a great deal of noise and confusion, the scene draws to a bloody conclusion.

One short scene more, on the *quai* of the Seine, where bands of desperate and unfortunate Huguenots are being pursued by the devout Catholics with bloody swords. Raoul, badly wounded, is led in supported by Marcel and Valentine, but St. Bris, arriving from the opposite side at the head of his band of murderers, gives a general order for the extermination of every one present, and when the smoke clears is overwhelmed at having contrived the execution of his own daughter. Upon this *débâcle* once more comes the Queen, preceded by Urbain, and at her ardently expressed desire, hostilities cease, and the curtain falls.

THE JEWELS OF THE MADONNA

By ERMANNO WOLF-FERRARI

First Produced in Berlin, 1911

THE composer calls this an opera on "Neapolitan life," which, if we are to judge by this feverish libretto, must be life indeed. Unfortunately more passion and fervor have been infused into the story than into the music, which although acceptable, is never great and always seems to be running futilely and breathlessly in an effort to keep up with the action. Wolf-Ferrari knows all the ingredients for a "thriller" and uses them with a lavish hand. He should be a great success at movie scenarios, for he has an instinct for melodrama and knows how to make a plot to order. Nothing could exceed the color and excitement and lurid emotion of this work.

ACT I takes place in a little square bordering the sea, in what we judge to be the native quarter of Naples. On the left is the unpretentious house of Carmela, whose front door gives on a little balcony reached by a short flight of steps. Near by is the smithy and anvil of Gennaro, her son, and further along are various little shops, green-grocers and spaghetti parlors. The day is very fine and the scene is simply swarming with every conceivable citizen in holiday mood and attire, for this is the summer festival of the Virgin. Local color is laid on with a lavish brush, there is a passing to and fro of gayly decked crowds, who sing and laugh and gibe, their progress interrupted by vendors of every imaginable cheap delight and frivolity. Much time in the opening of the act is given to rather unimportant comings and goings of various units in the gay ensemble.

As the stage finally empties a bit, we observe Gennaro at work before his anvil. He is a solemn fellow, and cares nothing for feasts and festas. He is just completing a huge and ornate candelabrum which is obviously destined for sacred usage. Putting candles and flowers on its branches, he kneels down before it and prays to the Virgin that his handiwork may prove acceptable, and

his overburdened heart find some slight relief. Gennaro's pious attitude toward his work may be the rule in Naples, but it strikes with startling unfamiliarity upon northern eyes and ears.

His devotions are interrupted by the sudden appearance of his foster sister, Maliella, who rushes from the house on the left hotly pursued by the querulous and indignant Carmela with a hairbrush. Maliella's blood races too quick and exuberant in her young veins. She is a beautiful, volatile, unrestrained mad-cap, and Gennaro cherishes a secret passion for her, although he should have better sense—she is not cut on the pattern of good wives. Just now she is wild at the slightest suggestion of parental discipline. Carmela wants her hair up. . . . Maliella will wear it down. She sings an excited aria aimed against the pressure of convention, and all restrictions great and small. To hear her one might suppose her to be an abandoned hussy, but as a matter of fact, little liberty has ever been granted her, and she is just beginning her wayward career. She looks over at the frowning, jealous Gennaro with distaste, and just to aggravate him the more bursts into a whirling, reckless song of independence. Her wild mood, her laughter, her music soon attract about her a crowd of curious and interested friends, who cheer her on at the same time they are criticizing her, after the manner of many friends the world over. She poses, she dramatizes, she dances faster and faster, while the men roar with pleasure and pelt her with flowers. Only the sight of the returning Carmela quells the riot, and pursued by the fascinated young men, Maliella runs off, leaving her foster mother and the pious Gennaro to consult together over what is best to be done.

Carmela must be a secretive soul, for up until this moment it has never occurred to her to tell her son who the girl is and how it all happened. It seems that once when the boy was little he lay very ill, and his mother, asking the favor of his health from the Virgin, vowed to adopt a little child of sin. Maliella, found in the street shortly after and filling the requirements, was taken into her home, and Gennaro straightway recovered. "Oh, would that I had not!" sighs the stricken young man, but his mother, misunderstanding him, says that all their care will be over if they can but marry her off successfully. Carmela suggests that Gennaro walk once more his beaten track to the church and pray for the Madonna's help, and Gennaro goes.

Now there enters a band of the Neapolitan Camorristi, pursuing one Biaso, a terrified creature, a letter-writer by trade. He is trying to rescue Maliella, but fights a losing battle and retires

into his hut. Maliella does not really need much help, she seems quite thoroughly capable of taking care of herself. Excited, laughing, she tries rather half-heartedly to elude Rafaele, their handsome young leader, who, caught by her beauty and spirit, is a whirlwind of ardor. He pursues, she coquettes. He offers her a flower, which she, dying to have, rejects. He sticks it nonchalantly into his button-hole, and calls on his comrades to help him catch the minx. They all close in, and a kiss is imminent. But now the contrary girl is really angry, and stamps her foot in fury. Her temper delights her suitor the more. They press her a little too hard, for she suddenly pulls upon them a typical woman's weapon, a long, sharp hairpin, and in a mimic duel with Rafaele, inflicts a real wound which bleeds. Rafaele, however, scorns such puny hurts, and kissing the spot, declares that he quite enjoys this novel form of caress. He kneels at her feet and returns the weapon so sweetly that in spite of herself, she feels inclined to forgive him.

She replaces the pin in her hair, and the moment her arms are lifted, Rafaele fastens the rejected flower on her breast. She says nothing but looks volumes, and finally turns her back to hide her telltale eyes. Her hair arranged, she tries once more to escape, and finding her way again blocked by the Camorristi and their flowers, stamps her foot, takes the whole blockade in her stride, once more throws down the poor over-worked rose, and enters her house. With a shrug and a grin her lover picks up what is left of the flower, and strolls over to a wine-stand, where he drinks with elaborate indifference, the while, from the tail of his eye, he observes Maliella taking in the family wash. She, too, is not unconscious of his presence, and when for a momentary flash their insolent eyes meet, he raises his glass to her with a captivating smile and drinks. He is a fascinating fellow.

Now the stage begins to fill with crowds again, and in the rear, what purport to be decorated barges glide in and out. Children laugh and call, and the chorus warbles happily of all the diversions they are enjoying. Presently the Madonna's procession, the chief feature of the day, begins its march, and stimulated by excitement and wine, Rafaele goes over to Maliella and tries to win back her favor. "Will you be friends?" he begs. "No!" she screams, showing plainly by the violence of her refusal that she means, "Yes."

Then suddenly the statue of the Madonna is borne on. It suggests a fantastic idea to Rafaele. "I adore you so, my dear, that I'd even steal for you the jewels of the Madonna!" Maliella is

shocked, for this is sacrilege, but the very audacity of the thing makes its impression, and Rafaele gains his end . . . he has given her food for thought. So almost-won is she, that the intrusion of Gennaro's disapproval is doubly welcome. As is usually the case, his very objections to Rafaele but fan the flame, and she loudly tells the world that he is a man, and the choice of her heart. Gennaro's severity enrages the young Camorrist. Ever ready for a duel on the slightest provocation, he puts the same durable little red flower between his teeth and starts for Gennaro, who, nothing loath, would meet him half-way but for the fortunate return of the procession and the statue, for Benediction. The two men, with the rest of the crowd, are forced to their knees. Just before the curtain falls, Maliella runs away to her house, but before she has reached the door, Rafaele half rises and throws her the red rose. After a quick look at the prayerfully recollected Gennaro, she puts it between her own teeth, where we hope it finally finds rest.

ACT II takes places in the little garden of Carmela's house. A crumbling wall encloses it and, with one gable of the house, encompasses the stage. Only through a break in the construction can we catch a glimpse of the street and the blue of the sea. It is a tumble-down sort of place, but is, after the custom of such ruins in Italian scenery, extremely picturesque and charming. Maliella, however, does not find it so. To her it is a prison—no more, no less. As the curtain rises we see her leaning upon the gate and gazing wistfully out into the world, her indifferent back turned toward Gennaro, who dines *al fresco* in the opposite corner, served by his mamma. Soon the older woman goes in to wash the dishes and go to bed and Gennaro seizes the opportunity to warn his wayward sister against the bold and handsome ruffian, Rafaele, who has so obviously caught her fancy. The libretto says that he approaches her "trembling," and it is a great mistake, for she sees at once that she has the upper hand, and can do as she likes. His anxious, sober face and mournful tones give her resolution the little push needed to send her over the brink. Laughing somewhat wildly, she rushes up the outside staircase to pack up her belongings and be off. We can see her in her room, a buoyant shadow moving before the light, as she collects her modest belongings and ties them in a bundle. And as she goes to and fro she sings a mocking, bantering thing which gets on Gennaro's nerves to the extent of tears spilled into his horny palms as he leans

against the orange-tree beneath. Her tripping steps on the stairs rouse him to action and he bars her escape with the most dramatic sobs, pleas and gestures. Maliella is somewhat startled to discover such unsuspected appreciation in her brother, and when he shamelessly blurts out that he loves her with a love quite different from the domestic brand she offers him, she screams with the shock, and then laughs enormously at such a quaint conceit. Finally she grows angry, and to stop his ravings describes to him the only man who would have a chance of winning her. Her description fits Rafaele with unwrinkled neatness, and she adds for good measure, "Why, he even offered to steal for me the Madonna's jewels!"

She starts to go. He bars her passage. There is a short skirmish and the strong man wins, locking the gate and pocketing the key. Raging but helpless, the girl goes back up the stairs to her room and slams the door. But she has left behind her no peace of mind for Gennaro. Staggering about and muttering, "No! No!" hoarsely from time to time, we suspect him to be in the throes of some mighty temptation. Eventually, when his pantomime is exhausted, he gives in. Fetching his tool kit, he carefully selects a little file or two and a key, then looking toward the lighted window and the cause of all his suffering, gasps out, "For you!"—crosses himself and sneaks out.

Almost immediately we hear the chorus of the Camorristi from the shore and Rafaele approaches with various friends armed with guitars and mandolins, who, stationing themselves near the break in the wall, proceed to serenade Maliella. Promptly the lady looks out, makes sure that her brother is not lurking about, and then descends, adding, as a sop to the conventions, a small red shawl over her night attire. Now follows a love scene and duet as passionate as the intervening gate will permit, lasting until Rafaele, warned by the song of his friends that steps are approaching, tears himself reluctantly away. He has won her promise, however, to follow him to-morrow, and become Queen of the Camorristi.

The effusive Maliella is quite overcome by this, her first taste of real romance, and sinks to the ground in a sort of trance, through which she dimly perceives Gennaro's open tool-box upon the table. Some sixth sense tells her that all is not well. "My God!" she exclaims, as he suddenly lets himself in at the gate, and coming towards her, fiercely thrusts forward a little bundle wrapped in red damask.

Dazed, she removes the wrappings, and with a great cry of wonder and terror, reveals the gleaming jewels worn by the sacred Statue in the procession.

From now on everything is very awkward and confused. Gennaro, the victim of "mystical passion and heroic frenzy," pleads for her love and assures her that even the Madonna probably will agree that the end justifies the means, while Maliella, a little light-headed from all that is suddenly happening in her quiet life, and completely unstrung, apparently confounds the personalities of her two lovers in an unfortunate yielding to the wrong one, who embraces her with Latin ardor, as the curtain falls.

ACT III plays in the "haunt of the Camorristi," a rough sort of shelter somewhere on the seamy side of Naples. The room is bare of the smallest conveniences, but as always there is a shrine and picture of Our Lady, and plenty of tankards and bottles of wine. It is a popular night, for the room quickly fills with all the iniquitous brethren and sisters. We are introduced to several minor characters who strut their little hour, sing, laugh, and retire. Several coarse daughters-of-pleasure make merry after their kind, and taunt Rafaele, who sits moody and preoccupied on one of the hard benches. They have discovered that he is in love, and are eager to know what powerful charm the girl has exerted to hold him thus for twenty-four hours. "It is quite simple," he declares without embarrassment. "Maliella is a virgin lily; I am her first sweetheart!"

This appeals to the crowd's sense of humor, and they wring much pleasure from his love-throes, and deride his unusual seriousness. His sermonizing makes them tired. A dance will lift the atmosphere. Considerately drawing a veil before the Madonna's eyes, they clear a space, and are soon swinging into the wild measures of a *tarantella*. At the height of their gayety and uproar, the door bursts open and in staggers Maliella, pale, wide-eyed, with her hair undone in operatic token of shattered conventions. She runs to her lover and tries desperately to make clear that, in a fit of mental confusion, she gave herself to the wrong man. This would be a difficult thing to explain at best, and to a man of Rafaele's limited psychic research, it is but wasted breath. Ordering his comrades to bring him Gennaro dead or alive, he then turns to the wretched girl and tells her in plain terms that he is done with her. But this is a scene of the richest humor to all the spectators, they laugh immoderately, and will not be quiet

until Rafaele implores them to be merciful. Mercy is a quality he lacks himself, however, for he thrusts poor Maliella pretty roughly from him. As she staggers, her inadequate red shawl falls off and reveals her neck and arms gleaming with innumerable blinding jewels. A hush of awe and horror falls upon the assembly. Well they know what she wears, for in their own portrait of the Madonna, these same ornaments are carefully reproduced. Maliella, beside herself, confirms their suspicions with the announcement that Gennaro stole them for love of her, and bursts into mad laughter.

Gennaro, now brought in roughly by the brethren, can do nothing but pray and plead while every one else, criminals all, sink to their knees horrified by this sacrilegious larceny. Maliella, crushed and rejected, sneaks out to drown herself in a convenient arm of the sea, while the men turn on Gennaro to exterminate him without delay. Rafaele, for some reason best known to himself, intervenes, and suggests that as distant bells heard in the city are probably advertising the crime, it is as well if they are not found in possession of the plunder. The wind blows out some of the candles, and in little groups the Camorristi depart, crossing themselves and looking back in apprehension at Gennaro, who kneels motionless before the shrine. Left alone he pleads passionately for a sign of some sort that the Madonna understands. A moonbeam glides through the window and sparkles among the jewels. He seems satisfied that this is his sign, and as the light traveling a foot or so further, gleams upon a knife carelessly dropped from the supper-table, he seizes it with a cry of dementia, and presses it with really horrid and slow realism into his broken heart.

The Curtain.

LE JONGLEUR DE NOTRE DAME

By JULES MASSENET

First Sung in Monte Carlo, 1902

THIS opera is really a fascinating glimpse through a stained-glass window at the quaint and naive life of the Middle Ages. Also it is unique for the fact that there are no women in the caste unless one gallantly includes the angels who sing unseen. Miss Mary Garden, finding much allure in the tenor rôle of Jean, successfully negotiated it as soprano, lending it an illusive and frail appeal which no mere man could hope to achieve.

The business of the brief prelude is to put us into the proper frame of mind for what we are about to receive. It is intensely serious, mystic, and consistently ecclesiastical. However, when the curtain rises we see no immediate evidence of a religious atmosphere. It is market day in the old Place de Cluny, in the Paris of François Villon. Apparently the entire population is out to take the May air, for the stage is thronged with a large force of supers and choristers impersonating with the utmost enthusiasm knights, ladies, clerks, *bourgeoisie*, peasants and cut-throats. Peddlers are hawking various tempting and succulent wares such as pears, plums from Tours, early strawberries, new cabbages, sweet cream cheeses and a comestible termed "green sauce." A mendicant friar, not to be outdone, is diligent in his efforts to dispense pardons for a consideration.

Into the confusion of merry-making and the chatter of sale and barter breaks the sound of a fiddle indifferently played. An expectant hush comes over the crowd, this will be a juggler approaching and your medieval crowd dearly loves a juggler. Introduced on a nervous, skipping orchestral measure, comes Jean. He is pale, ragged and dirty, a forlornity of a mountebank with a lean and hungry look. But his courage is robust if his stomach is empty.

"Make way for the King of Jugglers!" he cries in a pitiful attempt at the correct professional patter. But as is ever the way with mobs, pathos seems to them excruciating humor. They roar

at his infirmities, they dance about and mimic his angular frame—they call him “King Famine” and laugh prodigiously at their own keenness of wit. Jean, a little bewildered, proceeds with his pompous introduction of himself; but they interrupt him with more unkind jokes, and when in sheer despair he passes his little basket, he receives only one coin, and that a counterfeit—another joke for the crowd! Pathetically he offers them all the tricks in his repertory—cup and balls, eggs from a hat, and so forth; but these are all old stuff—they jeer and shriek for novelties. Jean shyly offers to do them the Hoop Dance, but at his very first hop the laughter breaks out anew. He is rapidly losing their attention, they reject his desperate offer to sing them love songs . . . war songs . . . *Roland* and all the classics . . . but old stuff again! A drinking-song is the very least that would interest them, and Jean, although his repertory does include one such, is very loath to sing it—it seems to him a shockingly blasphemous anthem, “*The Alleluia to Wine.*” However, he is hungry, very, so he decides that his stomach can perhaps be a pagan if his heart remains properly Christian. So he sings the song they want, but first he turns devoutly to the image of the Virgin above the gate of the Cluny Abbey and quite charmingly and simply asks forgiveness of the Queen of Heaven and the little Dauphin Jésus.

The obnoxious song—which is, after all, not so very terrible, meets with instant success, the mob takes up the chorus and all is at its gayest and wickedest when the monastery gate is thrown open and the stern old Prior appears, thoroughly stirred up and ready to hurl righteous invectives at the revelers. They evidently know his habits, for, like the Arabs, they silently steal away. Jean is too astonished to move and receives the full force of the good monk’s contumely. He allows himself meekly to be called “vile mountebank” by the charitable priest and merely kneels and demands pardon as he is told that he has insulted Our Lady at the very door of her abode, and trembles as he hears the orchestra confirm all that the Prior says of the fate in store for him—to be spitted neatly on the end of the Devil’s red-hot toasting-fork! Tears of repentance are wrung from him, and the Prior, having thoroughly delivered himself of his duty, is not unmoved. When he hears that the juggler’s name is Jean, a name dear to the saints, he proposes that the unhappy boy expiate his sins by entering the monastery.

Jean is appalled. He loves Our Lady and her sweet Son very dearly, but he is also young and he loves ardently his mistress, *La Liberté*: his freedom of wandering among hedge-rows and

open roads, the tingle of his bath in the cold brooks, his bed in the hay-mow under the stars. Turning respectfully to the statue, cap in hand, he pleads. Surely this thing is not to be asked of him! But the Prior is now hot after the new convert. He reminds the miserable sinner of the cold winter, the snow and the wind. When Jean does not reply, but only stares wistfully at his poor little fiddle and bag of tricks, the good man is annoyed.

"All right, idiotic one, go and starve in your ditch!" Then slyly, as he turns to reënter the door, he murmurs, as if for his own delectation, "Of course, the beans and fish of Lent are sometimes not so tempting . . . but for Feast Days, ah, yum, yum!"

Appropriately on this cue comes a fat and jovial monk astride a little donkey, the meek beast of burden being further laden with baskets crammed with flowers, vegetables, fruit and wine.

"Behold Boniface, our cook, from market!" exclaims the Prior, and Jean stares, wide-eyed, licking his lips.

Boniface scrambles down from his perch and displays to the reverend father his purchases. First, flowers for the Virgin, of every fragrant kind which she loves . . . and then nourishment for her humble servants. No ascetic bread and water here, but a fat capon, a thick ham, cresses, onions, sausages, cabbage and wine. . . . Old Maçon, no other!

Suddenly the bell is heard within the gates calling the brothers to table. "Come, Father," says Boniface. "What a meal we shall have!"

"Come!" says the Father to the wretched Jean, whose pagan stomach is slowly but irresistibly making of him a Christian monk. He follows weakly, helplessly, then suddenly turns and snatching up the little tools of his late profession, bows politely before the statue, and enters the gate.

ACT II. When the curtain goes up we see the studio of the monastery, which opens directly on a most delightful garden. Desks, easels and other evidences of monkish industry are all about, while the Sculptor's recent *chef d'œuvre*, a large and rather simpering Madonna, proudly occupies a prominent pedestal. The Sculptor, with his brother artists, the Poet and the Painter, are grouped about the Musician monk, rehearsing his *Hymn to the Virgin* in honor of Assumption Day. Little Jean is there too, looking very sleek and clean and shy, in his white robe and cowl, like a docile and good child newly washed and dressed for a party. In spite of his smooth pink cheeks and his well-fed appearance, he is unhappy. He owes his present comfortable estate to Our

Lady, and yet he is not equipped to render her any service, as are these talented brothers. He laments the omission of Latin from his education, and cannot join in the anthem. His *morale* drops lower and lower, as the Prior, entering with Boniface the cook, volubly praises the singers' efforts. When the Monks disperse and again take up the tasks at easel and desk and in the garden, the Prior turns to the young novice and asks why he, who was a singer by profession, remains so silent. Jean bewails his profane repertory which includes nothing but the popular tongue, and blushes to the roots of his new little tonsure as the monks good-naturedly twit him upon his laziness and his excellent appetite. Boniface defends him, and even the Prior, in mellow mood, remarks that Jean's face is a garland of lilies and roses quite fit for a morning offering to the Virgin. (Incidentally let us be grateful when this comparison can be applicable to Miss Garden instead of an inevitably swarthy tenor incumbent of the rôle.) Jean then, in an excess of humility induced by his recent opportunities for introspection, proceeds to lament his total inability to earn his keep, he is ashamed and begs meekly to be sent on his way.

But an idea occurs to the Sculptor—he will teach Jean his own art. But "No!" cries the Painter. "Painting is much the finer art!"—the boy shall be his apprentice. The Musician and the Poet rush into the argument; and soon the bewildered Jean finds himself a slender bone of contention among the several pettish Men of God. The Prior is utterly scandalized at the belligerent behavior of the gentle brothers and orders them promptly off to the chapel with the new statue, to pray before it for pardon. As they go they chant the new hymn.

Boniface and Jean are now left alone and the boy is still sunk in melancholy contemplation of his own inadequacy, but Boniface has no patience with such a mental attitude. As he diligently peels his carrots and turnips he informs Jean that he also can speak no Latin, but is quite convinced that the Virgin has complete facility in the French tongue as well. He feels himself absolutely on a par with the artistic brothers, for is he not a carver of vegetables, a painter in creams, a poet in roasts and sauces? "But I do not boast with these proud ones," he adds. "Our Lady loves best the humble heart and the simple things. I have even read that she prefers the very drabdest of little flowers. Listen, while I tell you the '*Legend of the Sage*.'"

The song which follows is the loveliest ornament of the entire score. The dear old ruddy-faced monk is inevitably the star baritone. The quaint, mellifluous cadences of this song give him

opportunity to prove his artistry in a singularly sustained harmony of sympathetic musical feeling. The Virgin, fleeing to Egypt, he relates, heard Herod's horsemen hard upon her. Looking desperately about her for shelter, she begged the wild rose to hide the Infant Jesus under her petals, but the rose was too proud and conceited to demean herself in any such utilitarian fashion, so the Virgin turned to the humble sage-bush, who promptly and hospitably converted her leaves into a little cradle for the Child. Thus Our Lady has blessed the lowly sage above all flowers and given the roses thorns.

"How wonderful!" breathes Jean, fervently.

"And, moreover, the sage is an excellent addition to every good kitchen!" adds Boniface with enthusiasm. This reminds him of the turkey in his oven, and he starts up. As he leaves he concludes his brief sermon to Jean by maintaining that the shepherds' pipe was quite as pleasing to the little Lord as the elaborate gifts of the Magi.

Jean, left alone, turns this remark over and over in his mind and suddenly it dawns on him that he has, after all, something that he can offer, too. It is just possible that the Madonna might enjoy a little exhibition by the late King of Jugglers. As he stands in rapt and humble prayer over the idea, the curtain falls.

The orchestra, weaving from its memory of the lovely legend which the old cook just related, a charming, tender interlude, binds the last two acts together with the "*Pastorale Mystique*."

ACT III. When the curtain rises we see the chapel, with the new statue of the Virgin enthroned upon the High Altar, and the Painter monk in admiring contemplation before it. But he is interrupted by the approach of Jean, and hides behind a column, as he observes with astonishment that the boy is carrying his fiddle and bag. Jean kneels a moment devoutly before the altar, then rising, flings off his white cassock and stands up in the old ragged motley. Spreading his bit of carpet, he takes up the fiddle to tune it by the same chords which introduced him in ACT I. The Painter, shivering behind his column, decides that Jean has gone mad, and slips out to call for help. Now Jean plunges into his work with zeal. He offers his usual patter, followed by a marching song; then, deciding that Our Lady will doubtless prefer songs of love, he attempts one after the other, only to discover to his annoyance that the once familiar words elude him. Finally he swings triumphantly into the immortal and far from pious ballad of "*Robin and Marion*."

Now the Painter returns with the Prior and Boniface, and they secrete themselves to watch in scandalized horror. Jean is just proposing to the Virgin that he execute a few of his most diverting tricks and dances, which proves too much for the choleric Prior. He wishes to denounce the boy, but is only restrained by the good Boniface who recalls the fact that David also once "danced before the Ark of the Lord."

What Jean the Juggler now proceeds to do in the way of acrobatics depends largely upon the agility and nimbleness of the singer. One is, however, forced to observe that even in the case of the supple Miss Garden, the antics of Jean scarcely justify the complete state of exhaustion in which the poor fellow soon falls to the floor. One must accept the symbolism devoutly or ascribe the result to an overindulgence in Boniface's "poems." At all events, Jean, having offered of his best, falls weak and adoring before the holy statue. All the brothers have gathered by this time, and as Jean cringes before their horrified faces, a strange thing happens. A mystic light glows in the face of the painted image, the Virgin opens her eyes and smiles down upon the dying tumbler. The monks kneel and gasp, "A miracle!" and the Prior reverently approaches Jean, who weeps, believing chastisement is about to descend. "No," cry all the monks; "you are the light of our Order, blessed of Our Lady!"

Jean's eyes are becoming glazed, he cannot even see the charming incandescent halo which has fallen from the Virgin's hands to burn just above his own head, but other wonders are before his vision. Above the solemn chant of the brothers the voices of angels are heard, and finally Jean, in ecstasy, declares the gates of Heaven are swinging open to him—and the Madonna beckoning.

"Here I am!" he calls happily, and dies.

"Amen!" say the angels.

"Amen!" say the monks.

The curtain falls. . . . "Blessed are the pure in heart" . . . quotes Massenet above his completed score.

LOHENGRIN

By RICHARD WAGNER

First Sung in Weimar, 1850

"LOHENGRIN" is the perfect opera for the average person. Being one of the composer's earlier brain-children, the *leitmotifs* have not yet begun to run riot as in the *Ring*, *Tristan*, and other more mature works, but there are, however, plenty of them to form a pleasing and understandable warp and woof to the story. And such a libretto! The lovely maiden in distress—the knight in shining armor—the dark machinations of the sorceress—the triumph of justice—and the romance of mortal frailty—interlarded with duels, love scenes, weddings, processions, and all the most gorgeous of medieval pageantry! Here then is offered you a very splendid experience if you have never heard the opera, and ever increasing enjoyment if it is your second or twentieth hearing.

Do not be too hard on Elsa. She was weak, to be sure, and a trifle flexible as to spine; she was vacillating, she was frail, but she was, after all, most lovably human, and, in the hands of a true interpreter, she is never insipid. She may be said to typify the earth struggles of mortal woman, seeing her heavenly visions but listening the while to worldly voices, rising to great heights and falling back wretchedly again because she is not big enough to sustain the impetus; grasping at happiness only to find it turned to dust in her hands.

The *Vorspiel* or Prelude to *Lohengrin* is the whole opera in brief: the glorious unearthly knight and his *motif*, Elsa's great aspiration (on the ascending violins), the crash of evil—the inevitability of Fate—it is all there.

The first act reveals a medieval institution in full swing, the dispensing of justice beneath the Judgment Oak. Henry the Fowler, King of the Germany which then included Brabant, is holding his court on the banks of the Sheldt, near Antwerp, on the occasion of his visit for the purpose of raising an army. He is distressed to find dissention and strife in the province, and appeals to Friedrich von Telramund, one of the leading Brabançon knights,

who is seated on the right with his unpleasant-looking wife. He rises and relates a shocking state of affairs. It seems that Godfrey, the young Duke, while walking in a wood with his older sister Elsa, mysteriously and permanently disappeared, leaving the province without a ruler. Elsa, when accused of making away with her brother because of personal ambition, cannot prove her innocence. He, Friedrich von Telramund, therefore claims the throne through the rather distant connection of his wife, Ortrud.

The men-at-arms clank their swords against their shields, and there is general excitement, but the King is aghast—he cannot even in that rude day conceive of such behavior on the part of a reputably gentle lady. He therefore prays to God that he may deal wisely with such an involved situation, and sends for the lady in question, that he may hear what she has to say for herself. The Herald, an important person who always seems hugely to enjoy his office, then summons Elsa, and the people whisper together and comment in scandalized tones as the white-clad procession of Elsa's women begins to approach. Last of all comes the young Duchess, a fragile, lovely creature, all white and gold, her eyes downcast like a virgin saint upon a missal. She seems to be walking in a daze, stunned by the misfortune which has come upon her. As she passes the oak where the King is sitting she merely inclines her head, and when he addresses her she murmurs something rather vacantly about "my poor little brother!"

Henry takes one look at her and is convinced of the utter absurdity of the accusation made against her. One might as well suspect a white dove, or a lily growing in a garden, of foul play, as this radiant and gentle creature. In reply to his questions she does not attempt to deny her guilt, but still in trancelike mood, tells of a dream sent to her in her days of sorrow: a vision of a wonderful knight in gleaming armor who, in response to her need, came to offer himself as her champion and defender. "*Elsa's Dream*" is a well-known bit of the opera, one of the most beautiful and inspiring passages for a soprano to sing. It grips our hearts and fires our imaginations. Her pure, unshaken faith! Such moments have been granted to all of us at least once. . . . The populace and soldiery, interested, take up the burden of her song, their sympathies rapidly aligning themselves with her.

Henry takes hold of her suggestion. To the medieval mind there was one infallible test of right and wrong—trial by combat. Might was always Right with our ancestors. Therefore let it be put to the test on this occasion. Henry will transfer the responsibility to God. So the Herald steps forward and proclaims with

gusto that any knight wishing to enlist in the cause of Elsa's innocence may do so here and now.

The notes of his trumpet and voice die away in ominous silence. All look about, and up, and down, and at each other, but there is no one so interested in Elsa that he will risk life and limb against the doughty Telramund. Ortrud smiles smugly as the silence endures; but Elsa, in fluttering terror, appeals to the King that another summons be proclaimed. Her knight was perhaps too far away to hear the first. Obliginglly the Herald goes through his little ceremony once more, and then Elsa, summoning her women about her, falls on her knees and pitifully beseeches the Heavenly Father to hear her cry.

Never was prayer answered so soon. Already there is a stir of curiosity in the crowd. One man has seen something queer down there on the river. He nudges his neighbor. The news spreads in an ingenious choral effect, that a boat drawn, strangely enough, by a *swan*, is approaching! Elsa is delirious with joy and vindication. No need to question,—it is her Champion, her Errant, her Dream Knight! With shining face and throbbing heart she stands expectant.

Now all attention is riveted on the extraordinary spectacle at the back of the stage. A boat propelled by a white-feathered swan, has actually paused among the cat-tails, and a splendid shining person clad in silver and white, with short, golden hair and cloak of azure, has stepped on shore. He seems oblivious of the welcoming crowd, his first concern being a few parting words to his faithful bird. His lovely tenor notes float to us on the *Lohengrin Motif*. The farewell is short and of piercing, heart-breaking sweetness. The conveyance retires, presumably up the river, and the knight turns and descends the embankment. He does not seem in the least surprised by what he sees. He bows before the King and announces his mission.

He has come, as every one by now suspects, to fight in the cause of Elsa of Brabant! So he turns toward the women.

"You will see that I shall know her at once!" he remarks. It never seems particularly miraculous that he is able to pick her out from among the ranks of her doubtless worthy but rarely beautiful handmaidens, but he accomplishes the feat, and she falls on her knees before him in gratitude and love. Not only *will* she accept him as her defender, but she will gladly bestow on him her hand and heart. Lohengrin will assume all these responsibilities, but he must make one condition. It is a request so extraordinary that he repeats it again in a different key. She must never, *never*

ask nor try to find out his name, his rank, nor whence he comes. In the delirium of joy and wonder at her deliverance it is easy to promise anything, and Elsa repeats the fatal oath, which the orchestra has seized and woven into the motif of *Warning*. Lohengrin, charmed by her sweet docility, kisses her brow. "I love you!" he murmurs thrillingly.

But now to business. Henry asks the perfunctory consent of Elsa and Friedrich, who answer "*Ja!*" and the Herald proclaims the conditions and rules to be observed in the combat. Several men-at-arms, to an amusing merry-go-round of a phrase, stake out a field with their lances. The pious Henry then comes off his throne, doffs his helmet, and in a mighty prayer, invokes the justice of the Almighty. Elsa and Lohengrin decorously join their voices to his, and Telramund and Ortrud complete the *quintet* with their furtive and threatening sentiments. Ortrud has been in a state of nerves ever since the arrival of the knight with his swan, recognizing the bird as one of the victims of her sorcery.

With three mighty strokes upon his shield Henry gives the signal for the fray, and the white knight and the black draw their heavy swords and circle about each other. The orchestra depicts their racing blood, the rage of Ortrud, the excitement of the onlookers, the tremulous suspense of Elsa who, standing under the oak with the King, is frozen in an agony of apprehension. Lohengrin bears a potent charm, however. Unscathed, he easily downs Telramund in the first round, but magnanimously spares his life. With the aid of his stricken and incensed wife, Friedrich rises to receive sentence of banishment, while all about him the populace have gone mad over his defeat and the vindication of their Duchess' innocence. Elsa, clasped in the silver arms of Lohengrin, is wrapt in ecstasy almost too keen to bear and only ceases her share of the flood of vocal rapture to climb upon the King's shield padded with a bearskin, and to be raised on the shoulders of her retainers, while Lohengrin, similarly perched upon his own shield, is borne off with her in a triumphal exit. Children wave branches and dance, the men shout and beat their shields, the women laugh and cry with joy, and only the orchestra gives a thought to anything beyond the wildest exultation of the moment.

ACT II. It is the dark hour before dawn when the curtain rises on this, the finest act of the opera. We see the inner court of the Royal Palace at Antwerp. In the rear is the wing of the castle in which the knights are lodged, and where conviviality incident to Lohengrin's nuptials is still prolonged, as the lighted windows

and muffled sounds of festivity attest. At the left is the Hall of the Ladies, where are Elsa's quarters, and at the right the porch and great portal of the Minster. On these steps crouch Telramund and Ortrud, outcast and wretched, clad in coarse dark garments and harboring coarse dark thoughts. Telramund, after the fashion of mankind, is reproaching the woman. This awkward situation in which they find themselves is entirely her fault. Would that he had never listened to her wiles when the virtuous Elsa refused him her hand! He will never in the future believe a word she says, he doubts even the right of succession of which she boasts.

Ortrud observes acidly that it is a pity Friedrich did not use this fine mood of vituperation in the duel, when it might have been of some use. Still, all is not lost! As she expected, this last statement interests her husband, her power over him is still active. She explains that if Elsa can be induced to ask the fatal question of her strange lover his impregnability will be gone, especially if in some way Telramund can contrive to spill even a single drop of his blood. The charm will be straightway broken, the usurper delivered into their hands, with restitution and coveted honors ensuing to them! Telramund is willing to make one more effort; his wife is not such a bad sort after all. Eagerly they put their evil heads together and sing of dark plots.

In the midst of this moral murk Elsa suddenly appears on her balcony like a strayed moonbeam. As always, she is in white, but the jewels of her wedding-gown glisten beneath her veil. She has been unable to sleep longer, in ecstatic anticipation of the day's rapture, and has come out to commune with the breezes. She lifts her lovely face and pure voice in a song such as angels might sing if there were marrying in Heaven. Her eyes are raised toward the morning star, she does not see the baneful pair upon the steps below until, Telramund having slunk off, Ortrud accosts her in a sorrow-laden voice. Elsa, so happy herself, can bear to see no one in distress and quickly leaves the balcony to descend to Ortrud. While she is within the house, the wicked woman, throwing off the veil of pretense for a moment, mightily invokes the aid of all her pagan gods in a cry of great strength and satisfaction to every contralto.

Now Elsa, her way lighted by tall tapers in the hands of her pages, comes graciously out to the seemingly stricken woman, who humbles herself even to the dust, easily enlisting the quick sympathy of Elsa's gentle heart. She is not only offered hospitality

for the moment, but a place of honor in the bridal procession. In gratitude for this Ortrud slyly plants her first iniquitous seed . . . she feels it her duty *as a friend* to warn Elsa not to bank too heavily on the permanency of her lover. He is quite capable of disappearing at any moment as mysteriously as he came. Various already familiar and haunting motifs are here sounded in the orchestra to depict Elsa's distressed reaction, but she recovers quickly, nothing shall mar her festive day. She leads the older woman into the palace, and Telramund, creeping from his hiding-place, curses the world in general.

In the meantime dawn has arrived and things begin to stir. On the battlements unseen trumpeters salute the sun, retainers and porters appear to let down the drawbridge, maidservants cross the court to the well. The castle is awake! Telramund thinks it is again expedient to hide as four trumpeters and our old friend the Herald come out with a proclamation. It is no less than the announcement of Telramund's banishment and the penalties attached to befriending him. Again the trumpets sound, and the announcement is made that the Stranger Knight has accepted the title of Protector, and will, shortly after the nuptials, organize and lead forth an army under King Henry's banner. Great enthusiasm from all the knights, who have been assembling and greeting each other with a morning kiss! Only four are tinged with jealousy, and Telramund instantly starts forth to foster their disaffection. He is outlining, together with the orchestra, the details of his plot, when four plump female pages appear and sing with great earnestness a brief injunction to make way for the bride and her attendants.

Once more Telramund disappears, as along the balcony of the Women's Palace a gorgeous procession begins to wend its stately way. The music of *Elsa's Bridal March* begins its joyful progress and the ladies come down two by two arrayed in the utmost their wardrobes can produce. Near the end comes the young Duchess herself, and as she appears the music seems to burst into a thousand bubbles of light, to dance and sparkle and sing with the pure and radiant joy depicted on the serene young face. Almost overburdened with the encrusted weight of her state robes, she yet walks as if she trod on lilies, her golden head held high under its great spiked crown, her long hair hidden under the soft folds of her dazzling veil. In her trance-like rapture she seems almost unconscious of her surroundings until Ortrud, who, arrayed in tremendous and rival magnificence, has been walking behind

her, suddenly leaves her place and pushes Elsa aside, claiming precedence and denouncing the Duchess as reinstalled through an impostor.

"Who is this knight anyway?" she cries to the shocked spectators. "Why doesn't he give his name? Because he has something to hide, of course! He dare not even let his bride know it!"

The sensitive Elsa, so rudely snatched from her blissful dream, is overcome by this woman's perfidy and ingratitude. Fortunately Lohengrin and the King are now coming from the Palace and Elsa in her distress leaves her formal place in the procession to appeal to them for protection. The King comforts her in paternal fashion and her lover bids Ortrud in no uncertain terms to subside.

Once more the disorganized procession forms, the King leading the bridal pair by the hand before the assembled knights and approaching the Cathedral portal. As they mount the steps another interruption occurs in the person of the rash Telramund, who, risking all, comes suddenly through the great doors and bars the way. He boldly accuses the Stranger of sorcery against the King, but that wise man, discounting Telramund's state of mind, refers the matter to Elsa, who, although plainly much upset, bravely declares herself unshaken in her faith. But she is unconvinced and the evil creatures observe it. While the confusion incident to the outbreak is still prevalent, Telramund steals up and pours further poison into the poor bride's ear. . . . If she does not want to break her vow, there is another way! A tiny wound, and her lover's charm is broken, he cannot get away! Let her think it over, and later, in case of need he and his henchmen will be within call! Poor Elsa, her day is ruined, the fly is large in her ointment. But with a brave attempt to regain her courage and fidelity she takes the hand of her wonderful knight and follows the King up the steps. Just before she crosses the sacred threshold something impels her to look over her shoulder. . . . Alas, those backward glances in life! At the sight of Ortrud's menacing appearance Elsa all but collapses. Lohengrin holds her closer and tenderly guides her faltering steps.

The curtain falls as the orchestra mutters of *Dark Deeds*, and *Holy Mysteries*.

ACT III. The curtain lifts to the familiar strains of the *Wedding March*, not the bridal music of the previous act, but the real Lohengrin March which we know so well, which is tied up in our imaginations with most of our own hopes, dreams or regrets. It

is Elsa's chamber, and the bridal party has come here at last after presumably long and tiresome festivities, for it is evening. From the right the singers approach, the women with Elsa, bearing lighted tapers and garlands of flowers. From the left enters Lohengrin with the King and his knights. As the King unites the hands of the radiant couple, pages remove Lohengrin's cloak, sword and other *impedimenta*, and her solicitous ladies at last divest their mistress of her great embroidered mantle and heavy crown. The lovers stand up tall and slim and straight (it is to be hoped) in medieval tunics, Elsa looking more than ever like a wind-blown flower. For a few measures of the march the women circle around them, then, still chanting, leave the room and at last the two are alone. With a cry of rapture they fall into each other's arms, and singing their delirious love-music, they wander to a couch at the right. Lohengrin, in his transports, dwells lovingly on the sweet sound of her name—a fatal error, as we shall see, for she realizes that she cannot reply in kind, that she has no name by which to call him. Tremulously she mentions her distress and Lohengrin, for fear she will ask further, pretends not to hear her. But Elsa will not be put off, this thing has been rankling in her sore heart all day, so without actually putting the question, again she broaches the subject. Lohengrin, to distract her, draws her over to the casement window where the moonlight falls upon them, and bids her look out upon the serene beauty of the night. But in vain! Now she is a prey to all her fearsome thoughts. His very evasion alarms her. And he, misinterpreting her disquiet, tells her she need not fear the alliance, that his origin is an exalted one, his home of glorious splendor. Again he has said the wrong thing. This only adds to her fears. If he comes from such magnificence, will he not some day desire it again and forsake her, as Ortrud so artfully suggested? Nervously tired, hysterical from the stirring events of the past twenty-four hours, through the very intensity of her joy distracted with fears that it may not endure, Elsa is suddenly beside herself. He to whom she has given all—why can he not trust her with himself? All Lohengrin's evasion cannot stop her now; she *must*, she *does* ask the fatal question!

The orchestra, shocked at what she has done, repeats all its familiar opinions in quick succession, and Lohengrin springs to his feet, flinging her off in horror at what has happened. In a moment, however, his gentle soul is stirred to pity for the frail and lovely creature who has thus brought about her own undoing. Very tenderly and sadly he turns to her and sings that, alas, now

all their joy is over before it had scarce begun! But her cry has been heard and misinterpreted by Telramund, and now he and his four traitors rudely burst into the room with drawn swords. Elsa, with presence of mind, seizes Lohengrin's blade from the bench and offers it to him just in time. He pierces Telramund's heart with one blow. Then calmly and sorrowfully bidding the knights remove the body, he turns to his wife to behold her half swooning. He quietly rings a little bell which summons two of her women, whom he bids care for their mistress, and as they support her from the room he turns to the assembling household and announces that in the morning under the Judgment Oak he will explain the killing of Telramund and reveal his name and rank according to the expressed wish of his beloved Duchess. As the people murmur with astonishment and awe, the orchestra tells of the *Grail* and its *Servants*, and the curtain falls.

A quick change of scene carries us to the banks of the Scheldt as in ACT I. Already the people are gathered, for this is the day for the King's last appeal to the troops. Trumpets blow and there is much pomp and ceremony. The knights and the King, rather apprehensively on horseback, arrive and dismount as speedily as possible and take their places. Henry is gratified at his reception and thanks the people for their loyalty.

Suddenly at the back appears a solemn procession bearing the black-draped litter with Telramund's body, which is set down at the foot of the oak. The King is astonished, as are all the people, for the news has traveled slowly, apparently none but the orchestra know of the events. And now another mystery! Elsa, pale as death, once more in her chaste white robes of mourning, is approaching with her women, and Lohengrin, too, of heavy and sorrowful mien, although again resplendent in his silver armor.

Henry is not long left in ignorance. Lohengrin offers explanations at once, and is promptly pardoned for the murder of Telramund, the King pausing to remark that he will not even be missed. Then Lohengrin, looking sadly at his lovely bride, who is drooping on a bench among her women, unable even to lift her head for shame and sorrow, declares that he has a more important announcement to make. He will not be able to lead Henry's Brabançon troops because, true to his promise, he must reveal on the demand of Elsa, his name and his origin. When this is done, by the rules of his Order he must go away never to return. Exclamations of surprise and dismay from every one; insistence on the holiness of his calling and the might of his name from the orchestra! He then describes in sublime accents the glories of Mont Salvat where

the Holy Grail is guarded by a privileged band. Chief among them is Parsifal, and he himself is his son, Lohengrin! The orchestra blares forth in great majesty the theme which we have associated with him from the beginning. Suddenly there is a flutter among the stringed instruments and a murmur on the stage. The men in the background have seen the Swan Boat again! Amid great excitement it draws to shore, and even Elsa lifts her weeping eyes to confirm this, her worst terror.

And now Lohengrin will say farewell, thanking them all for their courtesy and friendliness. Turning tenderly toward Elsa he addresses her, but already he seems to have withdrawn half into the mystery of his origin, there is little human emotion in his attitude, only a vast regret, and a sublime resignation. He had thought by a stay among them to return her lost brother, but he has been prevented. However, if the boy ever does return, he will leave with her his horn, his sword, and his ring to bring him protection and might. Elsa, swaying on her feet, stands staring at her glorious knight, trying desperately to fix in her bewildered mind the splendor and beauty of his face. As if in a trance she mechanically receives the gifts from his hands, and kissing them humbly, passes them to a handmaid.

Then suddenly the last moment has come. For a passionate instant Lohengrin takes her in his arms and kisses her cold cheeks; then bowing to the King, steps up the embankment. There is a scream from among the crowd, and Ortrud, livid with rage and vengeance, starts up in her rags to proclaim that Elsa herself has prevented the return of her brother. She, Ortrud, by her magic, changed him into this swan, and if Lohengrin had stayed only a year the spell would have been broken. Elsa swoons, but Lohengrin, understanding all, kneels down for a moment beside the water and prays. In answer to this petition a white and shining dove descends and takes up the golden harness of the boat, while the swan dives from sight and a comely youth springs lightly on shore. This is Godfrey, looking as neat and unperturbed as if nothing had happened to him. Remembering his manners, he first bows reverently to the King, and then flies into the arms of his sister who has roused for a moment to this new joy—but only for a moment. As she raises her face from her little brother's curls her tear-dimmed eyes look to the river where her silver knight, stern and straight in his little boat, is slowly disappearing, scarcely heeded in the midst of the general rejoicing. With a terrible cry she sinks lifeless to the ground, as the orchestra reviews all the factors in the tragedy, and the curtain falls.

L'ORACOLO

By FRANCO LEONI

First Produced in London, 1905

THIS one-act opera, although Chinese in theme, is musically quite cosmopolitan, Leoni having made small effort to produce Oriental effects in his score, contenting himself with comment and interpretation of the emotions felt by the characters. Consequently he has created nothing like the illusion experienced in *Butterfly*. Perhaps the fact that the scene is laid in Hatchet Row of San Francisco's Chinatown, instead of Peking, may account for much, although if that exploited spot is not always genuine, it certainly makes up in sinister atmosphere what it otherwise lacks. Just so with *L'Oracolo*. No "penny-dreadful" contains more hair-raising horrors.

Before the curtain rises it is well to acquaint ourselves with the cast of characters, for these Oriental names do not lend themselves to much clarity of thought, when once the play begins. Therefore we have:

Chim-Fen, the villain, and keeper of an opium den.

Win-Shee, the oracle, venerable and kindly.

San-Lui, his son and the hero.

Ah-Joe, the lovely heroine.

Hu-Tsin, her wealthy uncle.

Hu-Chi, the child of Hu-Tsin.

It is the dawn of the New Year when the curtain rises, and Chim-Fen, a dirty old scamp, with evil slanting eyes, and teeth as yellow as his skin, is about to close his den. To that end he drags a half crazy addict up the steps, and speeds him with a kick—he wants no more lunatics or such like on the premises. Across the covered alley is the house of the wealthy merchant, Hu-Tsin, and from the door the nurse Hua-Qui comes, quickly and approaches Chim-Fen. She is an early riser, but she has come by agreement, for the opium dealer has promised to marry her if she earns that vast honor by assiduously doing his evil bid-

ding. Just now he is anxious for a fan upon which San-Lui is believed to have written love verses to Ah-Joe. She hasn't got it and doesn't want to get it, but he threatens and she hurries tremulously back to procure it. She is frightfully jealous because she suspects that her unsavory lover has designs upon the young girl himself. As he leans there with half-shut eyes, four more drug fiends lurch up from his unwholesome cellar, but he hardly looks at them: their fate is none of his business.

The sun is now up and the busy life of the quarter beginning. Win-Shee, the wise and good, passes on his way to prayer, and Chim-Fen accosts him. It is always well, he thinks, to keep in with the respectable citizens when possible, and he begs a word of wisdom from the august lips. Win-Shee does not like the fellow, it is plainly seen, but he sits for a moment on the bench beside him and cautions him in flowery phrases about the life he leads. As they talk, the Policeman, the natural enemy of such as Chim-Fen, passes and goes on his way. Chim-Fen, a little too uncomfortable in such society, says that he will now go to bed and try to get some sleep; but the wise Win-Shee prophesies nightmare and adds under his breath that he hopes it may come true.

When the stage is empty of all but the morning sunlight, the ardent young voice of the wise man's son, San-Lui, is heard singing. Other ears than ours are charmed, for very shyly the shutters open in Ah-Joe's window and her pretty painted face peeps out. She too can sing, and now she salutes the morning in the most melodious bit of the entire score. Soon the lover comes from his door and a pretty scene of modest coquetry follows. The girl finally decides that a window is too remote and in a minute has descended to her own door where she stands in the stiff and correct attitude taught her as proper for love-sick maidens. For a moment the two gaze passionately into each other's eyes and then, overcome by emotion, turn quickly and go into their respective houses.

Day broadens and Chim-Fen has evidently decided not to go to sleep after all. Now he comes to his doorway, and observing the passage of the wealthy Hu-Tsin, runs after him with salutations and a very awkwardly expressed request for the hand of Ah-Joe. The merchant does not even listen—the thing is too absurd—and goes on into the house of Win-Shee, but Hua-Oui has heard from behind the shutter. "Perfidious serpent!" she hisses. Chim-Fen cares nothing for her opinion. A fortune-teller is now hawking his talents, and so the wicked creature thinks he would like a glimpse into the future. He pushes his way ahead of all the other

clients, but what he hears is not worth the price. "A shady past, and a black future, with a present that could benefit by a washing!" The crowds, who love the opium dealer none too well, howl with glee over this saying and pursue him to the entrance of his cellar, where he kicks them off and disappears. The crowds disperse, and the little son of Hu-Tsin toddles forth with his nurse and Ah-Joe. The fond parent, coming from the Sage's house, observes the boy, and bends down worshipfully to kiss him. It is something indeed to be a Chinese man-child, but less than nothing to be a girl! Ah-Joe is merely a marketable possession.

Now the learned Win-Shee comes out, a large book under his arm, and hints to the crowds that he is about to prophesy. All of them who have bathed to-day, being New Year's (do they do it once a year?) may gather around, all others stand aside! Only Chim-Fen seems to be unwashed, so San-Lui draws a distinguishing circle about him with chalk, and then all being in order, the oracular trance begins. The people are very respectful during these manifestations, and try to obey the Sage's directions, and turn pale when they hear that two souls are to free themselves from their bodies in a few moments, one to seek his happy ancestors, the other to roast in hell. Hu-Tsin hopes it may not be his "little hyacinth bud," and is reassured—the child will be safe.

Now down the broader street at the rear of the covered alley can be had a glimpse of the Procession of the Dragon, and the accompanying noise and singing attracts all the crowd. Hua-Qui is, in her enthusiasm, forgetful of her precious little charge, and in her absence the sly old Chim-Fen, obeying a sudden impulse, lures the baby with an orange to the cellar and shuts the door. Great is the hue and cry when the child's loss is discovered, and the position of Hua-Qui is anything but enviable. To escape her angry master she flies to the door of the opium den and calls to her perfidious fiancé to protect her. Chim-Fen appears, but thrusts her aside; he has bigger fish to fry. Addressing Hu-Tsin obsequiously, he asks for the hand of Ah-Joe as a reward if he should by *any chance* find the missing boy.

"Why, certainly, Ah-Joe and anything else you desire!" promises the distracted parent.

But San-Lui has been listening. If the girl is the prize, then he is going to win, he decides at once; but some strange premonition of evil seems to depress both his mind and that of Ah-Joe, and they sing a sad little duet and kiss each other impetuously before they separate. Now the old nurse, whose aspect seems a bit wild, comes from the house. She is thinking of nothing but re-

venge upon the man who has betrayed her, so she in turn betrays his evil motives and cautions the young man to beware. So San-Lui is left to face the villain who now sticks his inquisitive leering face above the steps of his cellar.

"Down, rat!" says San-Lui, and makes a dive for him. Struggling furiously the two disappear down the steps, to reappear in a moment, the missing child in San-Lui's arms. But he is exhausted and breathless and the evil creature is at his heels. Just as he reaches the street, Chim-Fen dexterously brains him with a hatchet and scuttles out of sight, pushing the baby quickly through a trap door.

Ah-Joe is the first one to find San-Lui and all in a moment she goes mad with grief. Crooning over him, stroking his hands and his forehead, she sings his death-song, and then with a wild shriek calls for help. Hu-Tsin, entering with the reclaimed Hua-qui, is a little put out to find a corpse before his door on New Year's Day, but on recognizing the young man, is speechless with horror. Now the other father appears, the Wise One, the Oracle, and joins the distracted Ah-Joe in her violent grief, while all the gathering crowd wave their hands, trying in quaint Chinese fashion to fan back the departed spirits. Chim-Fen, coming forth with elaborate innocence from his den, is surprised at the ghastliness of the murder. Who *could* have done it?

This New Year's Day, although crowded with incidents, has been very brief, for already night has fallen. Even the lanterns go out and the stage is dark and silent save for the two stricken fathers who wander up and down, and the mad voice of Ah-Joe within the house answering the voice of the fog-horn out upon the bay. Win-Shee advises the merchant to go home to rest, and when left alone takes some prayer papers from his pocket and burns them. They do the trick. A feeble moan is heard from under his feet, the cry of the infant, Hu-Chi. Holding his fastidious nose, the Wise Man leans over and lifts the trap by its iron ring. Sure enough, in another moment he has dragged out the soiled and half-conscious child and restored him to his doting family. That settles that, but his own affairs still go unavenged. He breathes another prayer to the amiable goddess, Amitabha, and straightway appears old Chim-Fen, a bit drunk on New Year's wine and overanxious to keep in the Oracle's good graces. Certainly he will sit beside him, although by his shifty gestures we gather he would be far easier in his own cozy den. The voice of Ah-Joe is wailing, fog-bells are ringing, everything is damp and creepy, especially Win-Shee's talk of death. The

murderer is really frightfully scared, but it is too late! No danger of a knife, to be sure: he wears a shirt of mail; but a blow on the head and a horrible twist of his long pig-tail around his yellow throat, and the Oracle has avenged his son! As the ghastly death struggle ceases the Policeman comes by, but he has seen these same two Chinamen on this bench before, and pays no attention. When he has gone, Win-Shee lets go his hold and the corpse drops with a thud.

Already it is dawn again, but one day in Hatchet Row having proved quite full enough, the curtain firmly descends.

LOUISE

By GUSTAVE CHARPENTIER

First Produced at the Opéra Comique, Paris, 1900

CHARPENTIER describes this opera as a musical romance, and has been heard to state that it, as all his works, expresses his supreme joy and interest in his fellow-men, particularly the life in the streets of his wonderful city. *Louise* is indeed all these things and more—it is the poetry of the commonplace, the tragedy and comedy of humble life, and above all it is *Paris*, Paris in essence and reality.

With the rising of the curtain, we are intimately thrust into the general kitchen-living-room-dining-room of a Parisian laborer's flat. The proportions of the apartment are apt to be excessive, but should be discounted as operatic license, for the other details are usually quite perfect and worthy of observation. Louise, the daughter of the house, is imprudently leaning from the window to converse with Julien, a personable young man, incidentally a painter and the principal tenor, whose studio is directly across what must be a very narrow street indeed. Louise is petulant, and complains, as do all young girls in all walks of life, that her parental restrictions oppress her. Her family evidently finds Julien less attractive than she does, and the affair does not progress. Julien is keen for an elopement, if his letter of proposal is rejected, and Louise, who up until now has kept an eye on the door against the arrival of her mother, so loses herself in rosy contemplation of the plan that she throws caution to the winds, and they are consequently surprised in the midst of their most ardent vows. The unfeeling parent promptly puts Julien in his place, the window is closed, and Louise is subjected to a flow of well-chosen remarks upon her conduct and his. The girl's attitude is far from filial; she impertinently declares that her mother's attack merely fans the flame. Mother is appalled. "You dare to boast of your lover!" "Not yet lover," says Louise lightly, "but doubtless soon, if you keep this up!"

Thereupon ensues a most unseemly struggle in which the

mother is gaining, when alarm at the sound of her husband's footsteps on the stairs sends her quickly to her stove.

The father, one of the most lovable of men, enters carrying a letter, greets them and asks at once concerning the evening meal. He sits down to read his communication, while Louise, regarding him constantly from the tail of her eye, sets the table. It is always interesting to watch the prima donna accomplish this humble domestic task, her inconsequential arrangement of dishes and cutlery is usually highly diverting. When Father, accompanied by the orchestra, has thoroughly digested the letter, he turns silently to his embarrassed child and opens his arms. They embrace with really touching sympathy as Mother, strictly utilitarian, brings in the soup. At once, true to type, they all eat with thorough concentration. When the edge of his appetite is dulled, Father converses a bit about his really trying lot in life, but Mother is unsympathetic; she pointedly declares any laborer to be worth any two artists and like good-for-nothings. Not the least of Father's lovable qualities are his optimism and philosophy; now he diplomatically brings the discussion and the repast to a close. "At any rate, I have a nice family!" he asserts, kisses his child, and drags his reluctant spouse into a few heavy measures of a waltz. Then he subsides with his paper while his women folk "clear away the dishes."

Louise shyly lingers in the kitchenette with an ear turned to the parental discussion of Julien's letter which now follows. Father is plainly on the fence, but Mother is thoroughly in opposition. Finally Louise cannot bear her remarks any longer and flies to her lover's defense, only to be neatly slapped by Mother, who bustles off, fuming, to do a little ironing, leaving Father to reason with his erring offspring. In a lovely, warm, and affectionate melody he delivers a little sermon on husbands and the general perils of the same. Louise puts in a protesting word here and there, and Mother, from the kitchenette, mocks her daughter's ardors and bangs her irons in time to her taunting words.

Finally, Louise, as should every good French child, bows to the parental edict, although she sniffles dismally into a ball of a handkerchief. Dutifully she settles down to read the evening paper aloud, but at the announcement therein that "All Paris is *en fête* for the brilliant spring season," she sobs frankly. Again she tries, ". . . Paris . . ." but it is no use. The curtain falls.

ACT II. It is dark when the curtain rises, but little by little we make out a few landmarks. It is obviously a street approach-

ing Montmartre. A flight of steps is at the side, and the famous hill dimly visible at the back. In spite of the smallness of the hour a few enterprising citizens are already arranging their affairs. A milk-woman puts her little shed in order, a sleepy girl folds newspapers at a restaurant table, rag-pickers and other forlorn scavengers rake over a heap of rubbish. A few housekeepers pass by to market, and even a late reveller in masquerade, who has been unable to locate his own front door, flits gayly in and plays mischievous havoc with the sober citizens present. Soon the morning light is turned up—the crowds augment with policemen, street urchins (one especial gamin of ill-concealed femininity), sweepers, hucksters and finally the Bohemian denizens of the quarter, among them our friend, Julien. He is interested in showing his friends the thrice-happy roof under which his Louise performs her daily labors, and declares that although the careful mother accompanies her daughter to the door each day, as soon as the old harpy shall have disappeared this morning, he and his beloved will elope. No plan could give the Bohemians more pleasure; they even insist that she shall become their Muse—then are promptly distracted as other pretty faces appear in the windows. They blow kisses broadcast, and go off singing in praise of their own great intelligence, gayety and other amiable qualities.

Julien, in roseate mood, even finds the voices of the street-vendors delightful, and soliloquizes rapturously over the charm of Paris as he awaits Louise. As a few of the more punctual girls appear, he hides himself, and just in time, for Louise soon enters, chaperoned as closely as ever by Mamma, who looks carefully about for lurking dangers before she finally leaves her innocent young daughter. As soon as her back is turned, Julien fairly leaps after Louise, and dragging her around a corner, he fills her willing ears with reproaches, caresses, endearments, and his tempting plea that she go with him as she promised. Louise feels herself weakening, but with a last spasm of conscience she tears herself away and runs into the shop, leaving Julien to listen to the street cries in which he now finds much less pleasure. "Artichokes new and tender!" "Old clothes!" "Seeds for your canaries!" . . . echo as the curtain falls.

Scene 2. Sometimes a practical and economical impresario deliberately deprives the opera of the ensuing scene. Whatever the motive for his parsimony, it should be condemned, for this is a most amusing and delightful bit of life, and is linked to the foregoing scene by an *intermezzo* woven by a magician's wand from the hoarse cries of the vendors of Montmartre.

The curtain rises upon a veritable beehive, the workroom of a fashionable establishment, where Louise does her bit each day. Girls are everywhere, doing every conceivable thing relative to the gentle art of dressmaking. A bold little errand girl diverts us for a moment, others argue and laugh over the curves which a certain costume is designed to cover—they borrow implements from each other, chaff, joke, exchange secrets, and eventually quarrel like irate hens. But Louise sits silent and morose and naturally thus attracts unwelcome attention. The girls debate upon the probable cause of her mood, and conclude that she has either had a paternal beating or else nurses a broken heart. Entranced by the romantic possibilities in their midst they gather about her and beg for details. Even the enticing sound of a hurdy-gurdy does not distract them, and one Irma sings alluringly of the joy of walking out with one's lover of an evening. . . . "The street noises are music!" "Yes, the voice of Paris!" confirm the other girls.

Here occurs a diversion—a flourish of plucked strings from below. With cries of pleasure they all rush to the windows, declaring the musician to be none other than the artist they saw waiting about when they came in. Each takes his serenade to herself and they applaud rapturously. Only Louise refuses to move from her place. Julien is angry. One can hear him punishing the strings of his unhappy instrument, and the girls, disgusted at his indifference to them all, shriek at the hurdy-gurdy to drown out his efforts. To its lively air they knock off all semblance of work and dance madly about the long room. Louise cannot bear all this merriment, with her own heart in her boots. Saying that she feels ill, she puts on a very modest little hat to depart. A few of the girls offer to see her home, but she refuses curtly, and, marveling at her peculiar behavior, they watch her from the windows, so of course see her join Julien and walk away. It strikes them as a tremendous joke. They and the orchestra laugh and chuckle delightedly as the curtain comes down.

ACT III. When the curtain goes up we are immediately advised of the fact that Louise did take the bit in her teeth, and that Mother's worst fears are realized. It is the crest of Montmartre, and on the left is the most charming of little houses, surrounded by a riotous garden and low wall, while roses climb to the tiny dormer windows. Across the street is some scaffolding, flanked by a hedge with a gate-way, and in the back, over the red roofs of the nearest houses, is to be seen the glorious,

fascinating panorama of all Paris spread below. With the aid of binoculars you can readily pick out the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame and other landmarks, but it is doubtful if it is worth while attempting to locate the hotel where you stopped.

In this enchanting spot Louise and Julien reside. He is sitting now in the little garden, enjoying the twilight and contentedly occupied with his thoughts, while she, leaning over the rose-twined balcony, watches him fondly. But silence is abhorrent to your true Parisian, so before long she gives tongue to her happiness and tells Julien how infinitely preferable is this romantic existence with him to her sordid work-a-day life with her parents. Her father's lectures, her mother's slaps were hard to bear, although in their way they probably loved her. "Love? Yes, but we have a better way, *hein?*" muses Julien. He draws her down beside him and together they watch the lights twinkle out in the vast city below them. First a few here and there, then chains of little jewels marking the span of the streets and boulevards. As Julien and Louise sing of the enchanted city, we are fascinated to observe diminutive skyrockets arching against the background and other liliputian fireworks going off with mechanical precision. As the lovers finish their song it assumes almost the form of a prayer to Paris, their Mother, and they kneel hand in hand to ask her blessing. Soon their voices are not the only ones heard: other happy children of Bohemia are mounting the steps of the mountain, so, their duet having reached a climax of ardor and passion, Louise and Julien enter their little house.

In a moment the first invader leaps the hedge and as he observes the lamp within extinguished, he beckons to several others, who proceed to unpack a basket of lanterns, bunting and tinsel, with which they stealthily decorate the front of the *maisonette*. A loud chorus is then heard approaching, and all the lights of Paris seem to be walking up the hill. In another moment the stage is swarming with every sort of ragamuffin imaginable. "Hurrah for the Bohemians!" shout the merrymakers, and perform astonishing feats of irrepressible exuberance, greatly enjoying the shocked protests of the elder generation who have followed to behold the worst. A mad procession now forms behind a mountebank band, and Julien's comrades, surrounding their absurd King of Folly, defile into the garden. When Julien appears with Louise, they seize her and crown her the Muse of Bohemia with playful and burlesque ceremonial. As the fun reaches its height and Louise is at last tasting all the triumph and gayety of which she used to dream as a *midinette*, her mother suddenly appears, like the

phantom at the feast. So depressing is the poor woman's appearance that one by one the revelers steal away, covering their confusion by mocking laughter. Louise at once hides from her avenging parent behind Julien, but Mother declares briefly that she did not toil up all those steps as an enemy, but has come because Louise's father is very ill and needs her. In response to her pleading, Louise, the filial spark never quite extinguished in her French soul, agrees to go home. Julien is a little suspicious, but is overruled, and after the most prolonged farewell, Louise tears herself away.

ACT IV. It is again the vast interior of the home flat, and Louise is, even as Julien feared, a prisoner. Mother scolds and fusses, Father moralizes and preaches and pleads, but now at last Louise is thoroughly weaned. She reproaches them for their deception and demands her liberty. She denies that her beauty was born to blush unseen, that her soul can flower without the sunshine of Julien's presence. Her parents, bewildered by this wilfulness and rebellion in their hitherto docile daughter, argue that she is out of her head. But the voices from the street and the lights of the city just showing through the window bewitch the emotional girl. She bursts forth into the most exultant hymn to Paris . . . to pleasure . . . to love . . . to life.

Father and Mother are stupefied, and as Louise madly whirls about the room with the fervor of her emotions, and as she calls frantically for Julien to hear and come to her help, Father can stand it no longer. All his outraged love for his child turns to sudden fury at her perverseness, and he raises his hand to strike her for the first time in his life. But Mother inconsistently interferes, and he opens the door significantly instead, and quite blind with passion, orders his daughter into the street. Louise is now thoroughly frightened, her mad mood vanishes and she runs about the room sobbing. But her once gentle parent is now like an enraged animal—in a moment she has been thrust down the stairs and the door slammed.

When she is really gone, Father's fury begins to subside. In a horrible moment he realizes what he has done, and runs to the door and calls—but no answer. Mother leans from the window, but sees nothing. They listen, hoping to hear her returning footsteps—but no, all is quiet. With a dreadful sob of rage and despair, Father stumbles to the window and shakes his fist at the glittering, heartless, terrible city, PARIS!

The curtain falls.

THE LOVE OF THE THREE KINGS

By ITALO MONTEMEZZI

First Sung in Milan, 1913

THOSE who like in either dreams or reality to grope among ancient passages in the crumbling ruins of feudal castles and to re-people them with those romantic and elementally passionate creatures we fondly believe to have been the original tenants, will find in the score and dramatic unfolding of this opera complete satisfaction for their imaginative cravings. There is an unmistakable atmosphere of mysterious foreboding and emotional apprehension which is said to have been the very breath of life to medieval nostrils. There is little real melody in the work and yet the score may be said to be wholly melodious. Its phrases are not precisely descriptive or even interpretive, and yet the mood induced by both action and music is identical. The opera is indicated as the finest achievement of the Modern Italians.

ACT I. The curtain rises to show a great hall opening upon a terrace. There is no light other than that reflected in the cobalt, star-lit sky outside, and the small orange glow from a lantern swung upon one of the arches merely intensifies the gloom. Into these mysterious shadows comes an old, old man, Archibaldo. His beard is long and white, his step is tottering, and he is blind. We shall presently see, however, that he is far from incapacitated, proving himself, long before the final curtain, to be one of the most enterprising old gentlemen in all fiction. For the moment he leans upon the arm of Flaminio, one of the castle guards. Archibaldo is in the proud position of conqueror and usurper, having headed a devastating barbaric invasion of that portion of Italy some years ago, and although he and his family are served well by the subjugated peoples, the winning of their affection and loyalty has never been accomplished. This Flaminio is an exponent of this very state of affairs, a fact conveyed subtly to us before he has been long upon the stage, although he is courteous and prompt in all his attentions to his master. Very little escapes Archibaldo,

even if his eyes are useless, and as soon as he enters the hall he either hears or smells that the door into his daughter-in-law's apartment is slightly ajar. He bids Flaminio close it very quietly, then directly changes his mind and decides to leave it alone. When the man returns, slightly puzzled, the old king becomes garrulous for the benefit of such of the audience who have not bought libretti or read this book, and sketches the existing political situation for a moment.

It seems that one of the conditions of the local peace treaty on which he insisted was that the beautiful princess Fiora should break her betrothal to the conquered Prince Avito and straightway wed his, Archibaldo's, only son and heir, the more or less worthy Manfredo. This Fiora did, having really no choice in the matter, but her interest in her husband has been purely perfunctory, her heart has remained, the old man feels sure, in the keeping of her jilted lover. Acting on this suspicion, he has come to-night, he informs Flaminio, to watch with Fiora for the return of her lord from a little siege he is conducting not far away. But Flaminio is certain that the old man's purpose is sinister and that he hopes incidentally to catch Fiora in some indiscretion with Avito. His faithful heart protests; he reminds his master that Avito was once the betrothed of the Queen, but Archibaldo pays no attention, and rambles on about the natural beauties of the countryside, as he first saw it when he came down the mountains with his conquering hordes. Then he bids Flaminio put out the lantern, and the man, knowing it to be a lover's signal light, becomes at once overanxious in his efforts to induce the old King to depart. Manfredo does not seem to be coming, why wait up so long? The further signal of a flute is heard from the courtyard.

As soon as they are gone, the lovely Fiora appears, and with her, just as Father-in-law suspected, is the young Avito. He is distinctly uneasy, the very quiet of the place makes him nervous, and the extinguished lantern confirms his fears. Fiora applies a panacea of loving embraces and calms him, but in a moment they both hear steps approaching and Avito leaps over the railing just in time.

It is the suspicious ancient again, who pauses in the doorway and calls, "Fiora!" The agitated girl decides to slip back silently into her room, but the old ears are infallible, she is heard and caught. "Why are you so breathless and excited?" queries the formidable old man. "With whom have you just spoken?" She promptly says, "Why, no one!" with cheerful innocence, but he tells her that he knows that she lies and describes to her what he

heard. The situation is saved for the moment by Flaminio's hasty entrance announcing the arrival of Manfredo. Even as he speaks, the young King enters in full panoply of war, and embraces first his father, then his wife. It was longing for her that prompted him to knock off the siege for a while. But the girl's greeting is scarcely more than conventional politeness; she is much more interested in proving, to her father-in-law's confusion, that she was on the terrace primarily to watch for her lord, which assertion the old man cannot deny. He is thoroughly displeased with the way things are going and as Manfredo draws his reluctant queen into their apartment, Archibaldo feels that after all his blindness probably saves him a good deal of pain, and thanks God for it.

ACT II. The scene takes place upon the broad ramparts of the castle, looking out over the valley. Upon one side is a short flight of stone steps leading to the battlements. It is late on a lovely afternoon and painted clouds shift nicely across a glowing sky. Presently trumpets are heard in the courtyard below, as Manfredo and his beautiful young queen appear. He is setting forth to resume the siege which he so sentimentally interrupted the previous day, and he is pleading with Fiora for her love, but she is still frigid and indifferent. Her situation is becoming unbearable, and she is extremely taxed to maintain any sort of pretense. Manfredo's consideration for her feelings and his humble despair move her at least to pity, and when he makes one last request before leaving her, she feels that to grant it is really the very least she can do. So after she has submitted with the best grace possible to his farewell embrace, she orders a casket brought, and taking from it a long, shimmering scarf, she mounts the battlements to wave, according to her husband's last wish. But the remembrance of his kisses is repellent, she shudders in an effort to shake off the loathing in her heart, and her hand falls wearily as she struggles to wave the scarf. When she sees Avito appearing, her sense of duty still keeps her patiently, mechanically waving, but when he tells her passionately that he, too, has come to say farewell, the veil grows heavier and heavier, she makes a vain effort or two, then her hand falls, her head droops, she stumbles down the stairs and into her lover's arms with an abandonment of longing and ardor that will leave few normal pulses in the opera house.

A short joyous love song, and then an intruder appears. Needless to say, it is the ancient Archibaldo, nosing about as usual, in places where he has no business to be. Avito, surprised and uncontrolled, is about to throw himself upon the annoying old crea-

ture, but the faithful Flaminio interferes with the utmost presence of mind and induces the prince to depart stealthily. However, Archibaldo's excellent hearing has caught the sound of the guilty, fleeing feet. Flaminio, trembling at the cold rage depicted on the wrinkled face, is determined not to leave his young mistress alone with him, but cannot refuse to go and meet his master when the sound of galloping hoofs suddenly announces that Manfredo, having observed Fiora's scarf to droop prematurely, has further postponed the siege to return and inquire the reason.

Archibaldo, left alone with his lovely and perfidious daughter-in-law, proceeds to accuse her of extreme indiscretion, without hesitation calling a spade a spade. She runs to the corner of a sheltering stone bench, and cowering there, weakly denies the scalding accusations. But when the terrible old man lays his bony hands upon her, she loses suddenly all her fear in a rage of indignation and disgust, and rising defiantly, proudly proclaims the truth of her guilt. Archibaldo, thirsting for vengeance, demands the lover's name, but this Fiora thinks best to withhold. The yellow talons are upon her white throat now, but Avito's name remains hidden in her heart. In another convulsive moment this heart has ceased to beat, for the horrible parent has throttled her permanently into Paradise.

Upon this pleasant domestic scene comes Manfredo, but as his murderous relative shrieks of guilt and vengeance, he is only moved to the most extraordinary admiration of his dead wife's capacity for loving, even if he was not himself the object. His reaction seems a most unique and admirable instance of extreme breadth of mind scarcely to be equaled in our more enlightened day. But in spite of his generous point of view, he is naturally very much upset, and staggers out, leaving father to take up the body of his wife like a meal-sack across his shoulders and to follow. Miss Lucrezia Bori, in the rôle of Fiora, hung for long moments head down in the course of this precarious journey, with the most dramatic effect, but although doubtless the interpreter of Archibaldo is selected with an eye to his muscular development, *prime donne* of more heroic proportions have always been withdrawn as briefly as possible.

ACT III. This scene bears a haunting family resemblance to the *finale* of Romeo and Juliet. In the chapel crypt the body of Fiora is extended upon a bier. White blossoms and the conventional lighted tapers surround her, while her people, the peasants of the conquered land, kneel about and join their voices to those of

the unseen choir. From the shadows suddenly appears Avito, wild and disheveled, and the peasants, with delicate tact, immediately withdraw. He flings himself on his lady's lovely corpse and kisses her cold lips long and ardently. For his imprudence he begins almost immediately to pay. He feels suddenly far from well, the chill of death numbs his limbs. As he staggers to the door, he encounters Manfredo, who prodded on by his enterprising and vicious parent, has come to entrap the betrayer of his honor. For Archibaldo had devised the nefarious scheme of painting the dead Queen's lips with virulent poison, sure that the guilty bee would seek the flower.

Manfredo, astonished to discover Avito as the culprit, starts to reproach him, but Avito indicates weakly that this is no time for argument, and with his last breath proclaims that Fiora loved him more than life itself. Manfredo, again strangely magnanimous, feels that he really cannot hate either Avito or his faithless wife, and still marveling at the strength of a love in which he had no share, himself seeks the explanation in death from the yet poisoned lips.

Archibaldo, prowling about as usual, comes upon the family morgue, and stretching forth his hands to gloat over the corpse of Avito, encounters instead that of his son. It is a severe blow, from which we are led to expect he never quite recovers, as the curtain mercifully descends upon the most unhappy results incident to the love of the three kings.

LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR

By GAETANO DONIZETTI

First Produced in Naples, 1835

THIS quaint old-fashioned opera should be regarded as a jewel-casket wherein repose two pearls of great price, the largest and finest being the immortal *sextet*, which remains to-day the greatest concerted number for mixed voices in all opera, with the possible exception of the *Rigoletto quartet*; and the second pearl the Mad Scene which has served colorature sopranos as a vehicle *de luxe* ever since the opera was first produced in 1835. There are many other splendid jewels of melody and song to be found in the same casket, but it is really these two which keep Lucia perennially on the boards long after some more modern operas have begun their last long sleep.

The story of the opera is condensed from Sir Walter Scott's romance, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, and the action takes place, of course, in Scotland, as the male singers conscientiously endeavor to show us by assuming the kilt and tartan. Apart from this evidence, Donizetti gives us no cause to suspect it. The music is purely and intensely and lyrically Italian from start to finish, but none the less lovely to the ear. Perhaps he was wise to ignore the possibilities of local color in the bag-pipes. At any rate, he did make one stride forward for his day, and *endeavored* to express in his music a little of the mood and emotion set forth by the words and action.

ACT I. The curtain rises on the park of the Castle of Lammermoor. Henry, the Lord of the Manor, learns painfully from his faithful retainer, Normand, that his sister has been observed in clandestine meetings under these trees with a young stranger. Now this does not suit Henry's plans at all, for the upkeep of the castle is expensive, his fortunes are very below par since the recent wars, and worst of all, the shadow of treason threatens to fall upon him unless he can bring about an advantageous union between his sister Lucia or Lucy, with one Lord Arthur Bucklaw, rich in influence at court. Hence he has without delay dispatched hunts-

men all over his domain to search, according to the libretto, in the most absurd places for this unwelcome intruder. As he waits for their return he sings plaintively that every nerve of his body is on edge. At last the searching party returns, but without a captive. A falconer, however, has told them that the young man in question is none other than Edgar of Ravenswood, Henry's favorite antipathy, between whose house and that of Lammermoor a well-established feud exists. Naturally this information only increases Lord Henry's nervous disturbance, and tunelessly "banishing all thought of mercy from his breast," he vows that something shall be done about the matter immediately. The curtain falls.

In the second scene we have another part of the park, near a fountain, with moonlight silvering everything with romance. A harp in the orchestra now speaks in one of those rare solos bestowed upon that instrument, and prepares our mood for the sad and sentimental episode to follow. If by chance one rendering will not suffice for this, the harpist is more than glad to repeat on request. Now Lucia and her colorless companion, Alice, come into the moonlight, to await the coming of Edgar. To wile away the time, Lucia relates the pretty legend of the fountain and her notes sparkle and drip and tinkle even as the water before them. The composer wishes us to gather from this first aria something of the character of the heroine, and we are convinced beyond a doubt of her gentle pleasure in beauty and romance, of the palpitations which flutter her virgin heart, and it must be admitted that we begin to surmise a none too vigorous mentality.

On the wings of a second song comes Edgar, very dapper in his kilties and bonnet, and the rest of the scene is devoted to a melodious discussion of his imminent departure for France on a political mission, with the inevitable duet of fond farewell.

ACT II. Now we are shown an apartment in the castle, and poor Lucia is there drooping and mournful over the information she has just received concerning her marriage to Sir Arthur Bucklaw. She points to her pallid cheeks as reason enough why this obnoxious marriage shall not take place, but her cruel brother trumps up a tale to inflame her jealous imagination, and shows her triumphantly a forged letter from her absent lover which her tottering senses perceive is an admission of unfaithfulness. It is her first news of him. The fact is that Edgar has written faithfully every week, but that Lord Henry has appropriated each letter as it came. Poor Lucia's emotions are lacerated; she begins to describe them in mournfully lyric phrases, in which her brother

joins his firm voice to demand her obedience. Raymond, the chaplain of the castle, is appealed to for advice and very politically agrees with Henry that Lucia's duty is clear. It would be the height of selfishness to adhere to a faithless lover, when a nice marriage can be arranged that will benefit every one concerned. So Lucia, the pressure of public opinion being too great for her gentle mind, agrees to sign the fatal marriage bond.

In the next scene, all the guests of the castle and the retainers thereof are assembled in the great hall to witness Lucia's signing of the nuptial contract. The gathering is a merry one and they sing a gay and popular refrain. Like a specter at the feast, however, comes Lucia, if possible even paler than in the last scene, drooping like a wilted flower beside her faithful Alice. Henry feels that her behavior is not very complimentary to the bridegroom and seeks to tactfully explain it away by saying that she is still mourning the death of their mother. But Sir Arthur gives small attention to such matters, the principal detail which interests him being her signature upon the dowry rights. So the poor girl, desperately putting off the moment as long as possible, at last totters forward and affixes her mark to the parchment. As she does so a really dramatic incident occurs. Down the broad stairs at the back of the stage comes a figure cloaked in somber hue, quietly, slowly approaching, obviously laboring under a fearful strain but holding himself well in hand. It is Edgar of Ravenswood come to claim his lady! Naturally, as he wrote her faithfully, he is entitled to some surprise at this scene. Hot with resentment at what he considers his unjust treatment, he flings the ring she gave him fiercely at her feet.

As in real life, all the people most concerned begin to talk at once, and the great *sextet* is the result. Edgar wonders why he doesn't run Sir Arthur through with his sword and have done with it, but thinks that it is probably Lucia's gentleness which restrains him. Henry, taken by surprise, is moved to regret but not to retract, his own perfidy. Lucia laments in soaring liquid notes that despair overwhelms her and that hopeless love suffocates her. Alice pours out contralto notes of comfort. The bridegroom wonders at and resents the intrusion, and the chorus swells the volume of sound. There is little else in the act and the curtain usually falls shortly after a generous repetition of the *sextet*.

ACT III begins with a brief scene in Edgar's shabby and gloomy castle of Ravenswood, whither, at the stroke of midnight, Lord Henry comes to challenge the tormented young man to a duel,

to blot out the insult offered the house of Lammermoor by his recent intrusion.

Then we are immediately snatched back into the great hall where the feasting and merriment incident to the recent marriage is still at its height, although the principals have long since retired. Suddenly the pious old Raymond rushes in, white as a sheet, and announces in horror-stricken tones that the young bride, her mind completely dashed by her recent perplexities, has gone violently insane and has murdered her bridegroom. The guests gasp and shudder, as straight on his report comes Lucia herself to verify it.

That she is indeed mad should be seen at a glance. Although some of the more modernly dramatic interpreters contribute a wild rolling of eyes and distracted gestures, most *prime donne* content themselves with letting down their neatly parted hair, running their fingers through it a little, and putting on a long white *robe de nuit* of ample design. The music they have to sing is here their chief concern, and they may well be anxious, for none of greater technical difficulty could well be devised to show up any lurking flaw in their *coloratura*. To Lucia's ravings is given over the entire scene from now on, and every aspiring student with a potential high C in her throat hopes some day to sing it, for it is a great moment to hold the stage thus for so long and finally to bring down the house about one's ears in rapturous *bravos* and storms of applause. The words which the demented creature sings are really more sad than mad, and the music, in spite of its florid passages, consistently conveys the mood without undue straying from the tragic climax of her unhappy story. Throughout the entire scene, the flute runs up and down after her voice, crosses it, supports it, leads it, follows it, until some wit has remarked that no wonder the poor girl lost her mind. At any rate, these transports of insane anguish are too much for the frail body, and before the curtain descends, she has breathed her last.

In the final scene, Edgar, very furious over his treatment, and in total ignorance of the late tragic *dénoûment*, waits for Sir Henry in the churchyard, armed for the duel. Instead of his proud adversary, however, he sees a train of mourners descending from the castle. Observing with horror the bier of Lucia, he promptly decides that life is too much for him, and in a last burst of melodious heartbreak, plunges his dagger into his breast and dies appropriately among the tombs of his ancestors, to the mingled relief and regret of those who now fill the stage.

The final curtain spares us further agonies of mind or body.

MADAME BUTTERFLY

By GIACOMO PUCCINI

First Sung in Milan, 1904

FOR some strange reason it always seems easier to cry to music than to laugh, so most operas are written to be tragedies, although it must be confessed few of them really make us sad. But it is different with *Butterfly*. It wrings our hearts with pathos from the lift of the curtain. One should never fail to have a commodious soft handkerchief in the pocket.

The play is so fascinating, the characters and stage pictures so appealing, one is apt to forget through its very familiarity the importance of the music. It is a running commentary upon the stage situations, the emotions and incidents, and is ingeniously interwoven with many real Japanese harmonies, with an occasional startling allusion to our own national anthem.

The curtains part to show us a little spring time garden, perched on a hill overlooking the town and harbor of Nagasaki. On the left is the entrance to a house, with all its local color of sliding paper screens, bamboo rafters and colored lanterns. Goro, a native marriage broker, is exhibiting its advantages to one Lieutenant Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton of the United States Navy, who is about to divert himself by patronage of Goro's agency. He finds the house amusing, but the three servants who are then brought before him bore him with their ugly faces and excessive politeness, and he waves them away, laughing at their flowery names. Among them is Suzuki, who will be maid to the new little wife. Goro is obsequious and anxious. At last he announces the arrival at the foot of the hill, of the wedding party.

Pinkerton is disturbed by the account of the many relations coming with the little *geisha* bride, and remains unimpressed when Goro assures him that she has one most superior connection, the Bonze, who will probably not even deign to come. In the midst of their conversation a ringing characteristic theme announces Mr. Sharpless, the American Consul, who, puffing prodigiously from

the steep climb, appears at the garden gate. He has come to legalize the ceremony, but obviously it is distasteful to him. However, he and the young officer shake hands quite cordially and Goro is sent for liquid refreshment. Mr. Sharpless likes the house and the view, and is interested in Pinkerton's arrangements. A lease for nine hundred and ninety-nine years with option to break at will is pleasantly convenient. The marriage contract is also of some such elastic construction. Pinkerton is quite gay and casual about the whole proceeding, to Sharpless' extreme irritation. It is obvious that he does not think too highly of his compatriot—however, he has no objection to drinking his health.

The orchestra blares forth a perversion of the "*Star-Spangled Banner*" as they drink, and Pinkerton rambles on about the Yankees and their prowess, especially among the ladies in every port they touch. Sharpless decries this as an easy gospel, but dangerous. His host insists on more "wisky," the word sounding strange in the midst of the mellifluous phrases of his song. They discuss the bride, and Goro makes himself objectionable by a hint to the Consul that *he* might also find satisfaction at his agency. Sharpless is in no mood for jest, for he recalls hearing Butterfly's voice the other day at the Consulate, when she called on some matter, and he is convinced that she is going into this thing with her whole pure little heart, and that Pinkerton is acting like a cad to betray her.

Then Goro, in much excitement, announces that the bridal party is coming, and voices are heard from the slope of the hill. Above them all the silver thread of Butterfly's song rises, urging them forward and exulting over her happiness. This is one of the most difficult passages in the opera, for it is a curious fact of acoustics that on most large stages, when a phrase is commenced at the extreme rear off-stage, apparently in perfect pitch with the orchestra, the astonished singer will arrive before the footlights to find herself a half-tone flat. But Butterfly forgets her vocal difficulties in a maidenly thrill at sight of her lover. She closes her big parasol and signals to her girl friends—"There is Mr. B. F. Pinkerton—*Down!*" Like so many obedient puppy dogs down they go, touching their foreheads in the dust before this most unworthy man. Then they flutter about him, and his little bride, palpitating, shy and coquettish by turns, pays him all the flowery compliments in her repertory. But her lover is not interested in verbal embroidery. He wants to get on with this tiresome ceremony and be done. Butterfly, however, feels excited and communicative. She turns to the more sympathetic Sharpless and describes her family, declaring that they once were wealthy; and her girl friends eagerly

confirm her statement. But when she mentions her father, the ominous notes of Fate growl in the orchestra and Butterfly hangs her head. The mood passes and she prattles on—about her fine uncle the *Bonze*, who probably will not come, and her other uncle, not so worthy, a Nipponese old soak. She parries with Sharpless about her age, finally confessing to fifteen—only a child! The pathos of this statement is lost on Pinkerton, who regards the whole affair as farce, and claps his hands to order for his guests some appetizing “candied flies and spiders, jellied birds’ nests, and other nauseating delicacies of Japan.” Then other guests arrive, the Imperial Commissioner, the Official Registrar, and an assortment of relatives. Pinkerton draws Sharpless aside and makes fun of his in-laws, but Sharpless thinks the lovely flower that Pinkerton has won is quite worth the price of all this impedimenta. Again he warns the hot-headed young man to watch his step and not to play with the girl’s heart.

The relatives are bowing and scraping and Butterfly flits among them proudly pointing out her lover and responding with spirit to their teasing. She ventures to introduce her fat old mother, and when refreshments are brought by the servants, has a nerve-racking time restraining the appetites of her family.

When Pinkerton offers her something, she indicates that she can scarcely lift her arms; her sleeves are stuffed full of her personal possessions which she is eager to show him. To her they are very precious. She exhibits with pride handkerchiefs, a pipe, a ribbon, a little buckle, a mirror, a fan, and finally a small jar. Pinkerton, who has been watching only her graceful motions, scowls at this—if it is paint he wishes her to throw it away, which she does immediately with touching obedience. But there is something else—she slowly draws forth a long, narrow case. “What is that?” asks the curious Pinkerton. Butterfly hushes her gayety, the orchestra mutters its sinister theme of Fate again. “It is sacred. I cannot show it before so many people!” she breathes.

The officious Goro, always hovering in the background, is quite ready to explain, however. “It is a knife sent by the Mikado to Butterfly’s father, with a message!” Goro makes a sinister sign of the *hara-kiri*.

“And her father?”

“He obeyed.”

Butterfly hangs her head and draws forth her last treasures—little images, the souls of her ancestors. Pinkerton is moved to jest, he bows before them with burlesque unction, but Butterfly is very serious. She has something to tell him, and here follows one

of the most pitiful moments in the opera. Little Butterfly has wished to make herself so completely his that in secret she has gone to the Christian mission and renounced her heathen gods. For this glorious and honorable male who has parted with a hundred *yen* to secure her, she will do everything to delight him, even repudiate her race and faith. The music breaks your heart as you listen. "So there they go!" exclaims the poor little creature, flinging away the images after the rouge pot.

Now Goro, who has been busy with the officials in the background, calls for silence, and the bridal ceremony goes forward. It is very simple—the ringing of a gong and the signatures of the parties to the contract. Butterfly, the wife, puts as much sentiment and joy into the stroke of her pen as ever maiden to her altar vows, and when her bridesmaids salute her as Madame Butterfly, she corrects them archly. "No! Madame B. F. Pinkerton!" dwelling on the impossible name with glorious joy.

And now for refreshments! Pinkerton encourages the utmost gluttony among the guests, thinking to precipitate their departure. He even toasts them and his own future, when suddenly horrid cries are heard from the hillside. The merriment goes out like a candle. Butterfly and her family know what this means. It is Uncle Bonze on the warpath! Sure enough, a fat and raging personage soon appears, panting and apoplectic. He points at his cowering niece. The cat is out of the bag—he has heard about her visit to the mission. So she has renounced them all. Good! They will renounce her with pleasure!

Pinkerton is man enough at least to protest against this excessive outburst, but the relatives, like silly sheep, flock over to their powerful kinsman. Of course they will renounce her! The idea! Chanting in shocked and reproachful exclamations of "Ooh, Butterfly!" they crowd down the terrace and away, leaving the poor little outcast *geisha* sobbing bitterly beneath a flowering shrub.

Pinkerton goes over to her and she stops crying to kiss his hand, for she has heard that it was a symbol of highest honor, and he comforts her by speaking of the beauties of the approaching night. From within the house proceed uncouth sounds which he questions, but Butterfly explains them to be Suzuki at her evening prayer. So the maid is called and Butterfly goes to her to be attired for the night. Pinkerton reclines in the garden and covertly watches his child wife, as partially hidden by a sliding screen, she sings and removes her great, heavy *obi*, and steps into a soft and mothlike garment of pure white. At last she joins him in the garden where the stars and the fireflies are now the only light, and

here they sing the lovely duet you know so well, which is really Butterfly's happy entrance song, glorified and enriched with passion and fulfillment. She tells him that she comes of a gentle race, happy with little, and begs him to love her as he would a child.

"Ah, my Butterfly," the unworthy man sighs, as he kisses her. "How well named you are!"

A shade of trouble crosses her face. "I have heard that in your land they pierce a butterfly's heart with a pin, and leave it to die."

"Only to keep it safe—my love," protests her husband, and draws her to him. Singing divinely of their night of love, Pinkerton slowly leads her, half protesting, at last wholly yielding, into the house.

ACT II. Three years have passed, and once more it is spring on the hilltop above Nagasaki. But when the curtains part we see the dreary interior of Butterfly's house, from which all the sunshine has been shut out, in keeping with her sorrowing heart. She lies prone on the floor, her chin in her hands, while Suzuki, still faithful, rings a prayer bell and prays, before her heathen shrine, that her mistress may weep no more. Butterfly muses sorrowfully that perhaps her husband's God would answer better, but that He must be too far away. Then she calls to Suzuki: "Tell me, how near are we to the end?"

Suzuki goes heavily to a cabinet and takes out a few coins. "That is all, and unless he comes soon now, we will be destitute."

Butterfly is distressed that they must have been extravagant, but, "Of course, he will come!" she assures the maid. But Suzuki is not so sure. She has heard tell of these foreign marriages before—they never come back! "But," objects Butterfly, "he told me he would come when the robins nest again, and he will!" In the orchestra little robins begin to chirp, and we know the time is at hand.

"Well," allows Suzuki, unconvinced, "we will hope so."

"We will *know* so! Say it!" cries Butterfly, and to please her the woman mumbles assent, but bursts into tears. "What? Crying? Why?" cries the little mistress. "You lack faith. Listen!"

Then kneeling with her arm around the old serving woman Butterfly paints that wonderful picture of her philandering husband's joyous return, that is known wherever orchestra, phonograph, or radio lifts its voice: "*Un bel dì vedremo*"—"One fine day we'll notice a thread of smoke on the horizon"—and then *boom* (from the orchestra) and the ship's cannon announces its



Tamaki Miura

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TAMAKI MIURA AS MADAME BUTTERFLY

arrival in the harbor. The approach of the man, looking so small, seen from her hilltop; his eager calling; her mischievous hiding, "A bit to tease him and a bit so as not to die of joy at the meeting." Finally their reunion in a passion of embraces and tender epithets. "How can you doubt it, Suzuki? I promise you it's true!" So real has been the picture, so thrilling the episode, that Suzuki is worked up to a pitch of believing. She and Butterfly embrace with childlike emotion, and then the maid retires, the little mistress looking after her rather sadly. For all her fine courage, she is but half convinced herself.

Suddenly from the garden enters our old friend Goro, followed by the polite and pained Mr. Sharpless. "Madame Butterfly," he begins. "Madame Pinkerton," she insists dully, as if from long habit, then looking up, sees who it is and is suddenly all a-flutter with glad surprise and hospitality. She places a cushion on the floor for herself and one for him, which he accepts with grimaces and much creaking of knees, seeing which she quickly trundles out her prize possession, an American rocking-chair, in which he is more at ease. Suzuki brings a tabouret for smoking and Butterfly gayly fills a pipe for him, first trying it herself, after the custom of her unprophylactic land, and inquiring for the health of his honorable ancestors, whom he concedes to be well. But he has business, disagreeable business in hand which he obviously wishes to despatch, while her careless chatter interferes. She offers him with pride some American cigarettes—she speaks of the fine weather. He finally produces a letter from Pinkerton. Butterfly is insane with joy, inquires if her husband is well. "Perfectly," says the Consul testily.

"Ah, then, I am the happiest woman in Japan!" cries the poor child in raptures.

The Consul clears his throat to get on with his disagreeable duty, but again she interrupts—she wants to know about American robins—do they nest less often than here? They chirp from the orchestra and poor Sharpless mops his brow, taking refuge behind an ignorance of ornithology. "Onri—?" questions Butterfly sweetly. She only wanted to know, because Pinkerton said he would come back when they did, and here they have already nested three times! Sharpless would like to consign Pinkerton and all like him to the Unpleasant Place; but Butterfly goes on to say that Goro has been annoying her by insisting that she contract another marriage—even now he offers the wealthy, fat Yamadori, of many divorces and supreme unattractiveness.

Goro here comes to whisper in the Consul's ear that it is high

time something be done. With the child in poverty, cast off by her relatives, and deserted by her husband, quite naturally "I offer her the wealthy Yamadori," he says to justify himself. At that moment the Prince's litter, born by two servants, appears on the terrace.

Butterfly, bubbling with mischief, promises Mr. Sharpless an amusing diversion, and goes to meet her suitor, prostrating herself with mock respect. He pompously takes the proffered seat and looking at her, sighs like a furnace. "What, still suffering from the throes of unrequited love? How can you, when you have already torn yourself from so many wives?" she twits him.

He becomes ardent, verbose, prates of his horses, his slaves, his palace—but Butterfly answers it all quite simply. "My hand is already given." For the law of divorce for desertion she has only contempt. "In *my* land" (the United States, if you please!) "divorce is not so easy." Sharpless unhappily confirms it and Butterfly triumphs. She claps her hands for tea and busies herself with the cups, while Goro whispers to the Consul that Pinkerton's ship has been sighted and Sharpless says heavily that that is why he is there with sad explanations. Butterfly looks up to offer tea, and the Prince, haughtily refusing, takes his leave. Once more he sighs, still hoping, but Butterfly puts him in his place with a final, "But I don't want to!" and he exits, an absurd and pompous figure, followed eagerly, officiously, by Goro.

At last Sharpless has the right of way. He exhibits the letter. She seizes it and kisses it, places it on her fluttering heart. Hopelessly the poor man flounders, squares his shoulders, starts to read: "*Tell my little flower—*" This is too much for Butterfly. She interrupts with her raptures. Sharpless patiently, doggedly reads along: "*Three years have passed, perhaps she has forgotten me.*" Butterfly is aghast! "Forgotten!" In indignation she summons Suzuki to say if she has forgotten. Every phrase he reads she embroiders with her exuberant joy. Mr. Sharpless feels exhausted. "To H— with Pinkerton!" he very justifiably exclaims. Then at last he plunges to the point. "What would you do, dear Madame Butterfly, if he never came again?" Butterfly is as stunned as if he had struck her. Then rather faintly and submissively she says, "I might go back to entertain people as I used, but I might die." Sharpless is more moved than he would acknowledge. Poor man, he is having a wretched time. And now another stab into her heart. "As a friend, I would advise you to accept the wealthy Yamadori."

Suddenly Butterfly's hopeless submissiveness vanishes. She is caught up in a whirl of indignation and so far forgets her careful Oriental manners as to command Suzuki to show the Consul the door. In a moment, however, the little storm is over. She runs to him, sobbing, penitent, but so hurt that she totters on her little sandaled feet. But she recovers rapidly and pitifully begs his pardon for her weakness. She is illumined by a sudden resolve. She sends Suzuki away and disappearing for a moment returns with a golden-haired baby, held proudly up on her shoulders. (He is apt to be large for a child of two, but no matter.) The orchestra plays triumphantly the lovely music of Butterfly's love for her child, which later will be heard at the moment of her greatest tragedy.

Sharpless is astonished and overcome. This makes things unutterably worse. Is this Pinkerton's child, and does he know? Butterfly is laughing ecstatically—could she forget with such a sweet reminder? Of course the boy is a little Yankee with yellow hair and blue eyes. . . . No, he shall be a surprise to her husband! But perhaps after all Mr. Sharpless might write and tell the father; it might hasten his return. Then she turns to the baby and tells him of the Consul's heartless thought, that she might go forth with her child and dance for the crowds. "But even so," she finishes fatuously, "the Emperor would be sure to see you and would make you his successor!" She kisses the child so ardently, so broken-heartedly, that poor Sharpless can stand it no longer. He starts to go, but Butterfly sends the baby toddling in his long kimono, to shake hands, American fashion, and the crusty old bachelor lifts him in his arms and kisses him. "What is his name?" he asks to hide his emotion. "Now it is Trouble," Butterfly replies pathetically. "But on the day his father returns it shall be changed to Joy!" This finishes Sharpless. He fairly runs from the room, promising to tell Pinkerton a thing or two.

Hardly has he gone than Suzuki's screeches are heard from the terrace and she drags in the squealing Goro by one ear. The maid accuses him of prowling about, saying everywhere that no one knows who is Trouble's father. Butterfly freezes. Goro bows and scrapes. "I've only said that in America such a child has no name!" He has wounded Butterfly in her most sensitive place. She becomes a little fury, would kill him with her dagger, pulled from the wall. He howls, she threatens, and Suzuki intervenes, to drag the child from such a shocking scene. At last Butterfly becomes calmer, spurns the crawling Goro with her foot, and

he disappears hurriedly. When he is gone Butterfly sings that soon her husband will come to avenge her and her baby and take them off safely to his own land.

Suddenly her pitiful faith is changed to frenzied joy, for Suzuki rushes in, so excited she can hardly speak. The harbor cannon is booming! A warship in the port! Butterfly almost faints. She snatches a telescope from a stand; together the two little women rush out on the terrace. Butterfly is so excited she can scarcely focus it, but together they make out the words "*Abraham Lincoln*." The orchestra raises the victorious echo of her song at the beginning of the act. So it has happened just as she said it would! Wild with joy, Butterfly springs to a perch in the low cherry-tree and shakes down all the white petals about her head in ecstasy. Then what a scurrying and a bustling takes place in the little paper house. It must be made into a love bower to welcome her lord. Every flower in the garden brought in to cheer its shabbiness; no matter if the garden is stripped, every single flower must be plucked. Singing the lovely *Flower Duet*, the two women flit about, their arms full of blossoms, filling great vases with flowering branches.

They have worked themselves almost into a delirium. At last there is nothing left but petals. Swaying and swinging in a sort of rhythmical dance they empty baskets of these over the floor in a pink carpet. Butterfly seeks her mirror, discovers that tears and worry have not been very good for her complexion. She sees dark circles, so out comes the forbidden little rouge pot to repair the damages, and Trouble shall have a dab on his cheeks, too, and a flower to hold. And most beautiful thought of all, she will put on her white bridal dress and the very same poppies in her hair. She will look like the little wife he left—she will make him happy.

It is getting dark. In an hour, two hours, surely he will come. In the meantime they will wait and watch. Suzuki brings great paper lanterns like mammoth fruits, and Butterfly carries the sleepy baby up the steps to the screen which has shut out the world for the night. In the rice paper she tears a little hole down low for him to look through, further up one for Suzuki crouched on a cushion, but for herself, the hole is higher; she will be standing straight and free when her man comes. So they wait, and the lanterns flicker, and the orchestra strums chords on your heart-strings. The baby falls asleep and rolls over on his pillows; even Suzuki nods and droops, but Butterfly, rigid as a white lily, never moves in her pitiful vigil. The curtain falls.

ACT III. The last act is very beautiful and very terrible, and is soon over.

The curtain rises showing the same three little figures at the screen, the sleeping maid and baby, the little bride still stiffly erect and watching, although now the screen glows with the morning light and the lanterns are flickering out one by one. All the flowers are faded and drooping. From the orchestra the same plucking chords are heard, accompanying a soft humming of voices through closed lips (the workers in the fields and on the wharves), and also the clanking of chains, and sounds from the harbor. Butterfly stirs, bends over to waken Suzuki, then goes to her sleeping baby and tenderly lifts him. Suzuki awakens with a start, is surprised that the day is come, but her first thought is for her little mistress who is still saying sturdily, "He'll come—he'll come!" She begs her to go upstairs and rest, promising to call her at the joyful moment, so Butterfly, carrying her sleeping baby, totters up the stairs, singing a sad little lullaby.

Suzuki goes to the Buddha to pray for poor Butterfly, but hardly has she begun when the blow falls. A knock! Suzuki opens the screens to admit Pinkerton, followed by Sharpless, looking more uncomfortable than ever. The maid utters a little cry. They do not wish to disturb Butterfly yet, but Suzuki explains she has only just gone, weary with a whole night's watching. She points to the wilted flowers, the signs of pitiful festivity. This breaks Pinkerton all up, but Sharpless only mutters wretchedly, "I told you so—I told you so."

Suddenly Suzuki looks up and smothers a little scream on beholding a strange, stiff, foreign woman strolling in the garden. "Who is it?" she demands wildly, but she seems already to know; she is trembling from head to foot. Pinkerton is weak-kneed, and funks as usual, but Sharpless is left to say, "His wife." With a wail Suzuki sinks to the ground, but Sharpless, trying to make the best of a nasty situation, begs her for her mistress' sake to help them arrange for the future of the child. Suzuki is shocked with the horror before her little mistress. Pinkerton, faint-hearted and futile, bewails the mess he has let himself and every one into, and the practical and thoroughly annoyed Sharpless asks that Mrs. Kate Pinkerton be invited to come in, and that matters be arranged with all speed. He is almost at the breaking-point, especially as Pinkerton begins to blubber, shows signs of running away, and tries to patch up matters with the usual Yankee expedient of money. Sharpless reproaches the faithless coward, but

finally sends him away, thinking probably he would only further botch things, and Suzuki and the American wife come in. Mrs. Pinkerton always looks excessively uncomfortable, as well she may. Her own situation is not any too enviable, but she is a good sport; she will take the baby and mother it.

However, something terrible is happening. Butterfly has heard voices, is hurrying joyfully down the stairs. "Where is he, Suzuki?" she calls. They cannot prevent her. She is among them. All her fluttering joy is suddenly congealed to terror. No need to explain the situation to her. In one terrible look she has comprehended. Poor Mrs. Pinkerton tries to be polite, and says the wrong thing. Sharpless shifts wretchedly from foot to foot. Only Butterfly, white as ice, is calm and collected. Why do they all weep? Ah! No need to tell her, lest she fall dead. Very quietly she goes over to the American woman and takes her hand. "I hope that there will be no happier lady under heaven than you! Do not distress yourself over my troubles. I shall have peace. Tell my husband he can have his son if he will come in half an hour!"

The two innocent parties to this tragedy go away with the message, and close the screen. Suzuki, terrified, runs to her fainting mistress. When Butterfly opens her eyes she sees the sunshine and pushes it away with her hands. "Too many sunbeams, Suzuki! Too much laughing spring! Close the screens!" So again it is twilight in the little paper house. Butterfly asks falteringly for the boy. If he is playing, Suzuki must go and play too. But the faithful maid, premonition clutching at her heart, refuses to leave. Butterfly is chanting an old song about death. Suzuki is crying. Suddenly Butterfly stiffens. Like a little queen she orders her maid to go, and sniffing, sobbing and clinging, poor Suzuki finally obeys.

Then, in her blackest hour, little Butterfly turns back to the gods she had renounced. The Christian's God has played her false. For a long moment she kneels before the shrine, then rises very calmly and quietly, and going to the chest takes out her white wedding veil which she throws over a screen. Then reverently she takes down her father's dagger from its place in the shrine and kissing the blade, reads the words engraved thereon. "*To die with Honor when no longer possible to live with Honor.*" Her voice is deep with the note of fate. She points the knife at her throat. Suddenly the door bursts open and on the path of a sunbeam, little Trouble runs to his mother. Suzuki, trembling outside, has played her last card. At sight of the child Butterfly's

heart breaks. Sobbing, she clutches him desperately and looks long into his baby face, trying to remember his bright image to take with her into darkness. A pitiful, heartrending good-by she sings to him, reminiscent of the jubilant notes with which she proudly exhibited him to the Consul, then inexorably she proceeds to her appointed task. Rummaging in the chest she finds a tiny American flag which she places in the baby's hands (token of the Japanese mother's surrender), and a doll. With a ribbon she blindfolds his eyes. "Play on, my darling!" she whispers, then goes quickly behind the screen.

It is over in a moment. The screen falls. She totters and writhes in agony, her white wedding veil bound over the wound in her throat. Gropingly she crawls, trying to touch her baby's hand. She cannot reach him. He goes on delightedly waving his little flag, and on this tragic picture bursts the fat and smug cause of all this woe, with Sharpless and wife No. 2 at his heels. Pinkerton cries out, rushes to the dying *geisha*, with futile lamentation. Sharpless picks up the baby, kissing it, the tears running down his face, unashamed.

The curtain falls.

THE MAGIC FLUTE

By WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

First Produced in Vienna, 1791

THIS is Mozart's last opera. He died two months after its première. In it he seems to have crowded all the ingenuity of his art, all the titillating melody of his soul. But what a libretto! We could not possibly take it seriously if the composer had not put into it such an enormous amount of serious effort, for to the uninitiated it seems like a delirium of nonsense, the exaggerated essence of a fantastic dream. The fact is that in it lies some symbolism which was of great moment in Mozart's day, namely, the justification of Masonic practices, upon which the Empress Maria Theresa had just placed her firm though shapely foot. Tamino goes successfully through enough ordeals to win him the thirty-third degree, and those who try to prevent it are satisfactorily confounded.

The opera calls for a super-cast and for the exercise of every mechanical device known to the overburdened stage-manager and property-man. Perhaps for this reason it is seldom given, but when it is, no more brilliant jewel shines in the season's repertory.

There is a scintillating overture, in which that classic form, the *fugue*, is given an unusual prominence, but this will not interest the tyro as much as the conspicuous and repeated *three knocks*, supposed to be a clamoring hand upon the door of the Masonic Lodge.

The rising curtain shows us a small temple upon a rather barren hill, in the land of Egypt—so says the program—but for aught Egyptian which may be observed in the setting, it could be any country or none at all. Tamino, a young man who has been hunting in a very elaborate costume and has spent all his arrows, now arrives excitedly upon the scene hotly pursued by quite the largest and most unpleasant serpent ever beheld. He calls loudly for help, and promptly swoons right in the reptile's path. His cries, however, are heard by three veiled ladies who emerge from

the temple just in time, sever the serpent into three sections with neatness and dispatch, sheathe their silver javelins, and sing a short ode to victory. Having performed their service admirably, they fall to quarreling over the unconscious and presumably beautiful youth, each insisting on guarding him while the others go to spread the news. At last they decide to keep peace by going together, and depart quite forgetting to do a thing about reviving him.

Nature, however, restores him in a moment, and his bewildered eyes fall first upon the most engaging figure. It is Papageno, just arrived upon the scene. He is probably the most diverting person of the opera, a bird-catcher by trade, and he wears a complete suit of little feathers, while cages are pendent from every available button. He sings a merry ditty about himself wherever he goes. Naturally Tamino thinks, when he sees the three neat segments of snake, that the feathered person is his deliverer, and Papageno modestly lets him think so, going on to tell him that he is Bird-catcher to the Queen of the Night, among his perquisites being food and sustenance from the hands of the three veiled priestesses. Tamino replies with confidences in kind, and we learn that he is a prince of Egypt.

Just here, the Veiled Three appear, and resenting the lie which Papageno just told, place a padlock upon his lips, after which, for a while the poor man can only utter, "Mm, mm!" to the huge delight of the audience. Their souvenir for Tamino is a little portrait of Pamina, daughter of the Queen of the Night. Her beauty seems to quite unnerve him, and they steal silently away leaving him to contemplate the picture and to sing one of the most glorious arias ever written for a tenor, "*This portrait has a magic beauty!*" He is vocally demanding of himself what he would do in the ravishing presence of the original, when the Sisters Three once more come on and inform him that this beautiful girl is Pamina, daughter of the Queen, and a prisoner with the sorcerer Sarastro. What is more, he, Tamino, has been selected by Her Majesty as the lucky man who shall go to her rescue. This just appeals to Tamino, and he lustily proclaims his satisfaction, when suddenly a severe thunderstorm approaches without warning, a seemingly solid rock bursts asunder, and there stands the Queen in all the starlit splendor of her court! The singer who impersonates this sovereign must have a voice as glittering and many-faceted, as high and brilliant, as the tallest stars around her throne, and her first aria is a test of the most golden throat. Patti, Melba, and Sembrich have shown us how it ought to be done. After telling

Tamino that she is depending upon him, and that his success shall not go unrewarded, she takes her three ladies and disappears, while the rock once more resumes its normal profile.

Loudly chanting his pleasure, Tamino is all for starting at once, but is stopped by Papageno, who mumbles, "Mmmm? Mmmm!" excitedly, and is finally relieved of his padlock by one of the Three who have just made another of their many entrances. Now they are the bearers of gifts, a magic flute for Tamino, and for Papageno a most amusing little chime of toy bells. These instruments are to ward off bad fairies on the quest, and for their further protection three winged youths will be sent as their guides. The orchestra tentatively experiments with both the flute and the little bells, and offers a description of the aerial guides as the curtain falls.

The scene changes to a luxurious apartment in the palace of Sarastro, where we see the beautiful Pamina entering in charge of a blackamoor, Monostatos. She is very unhappy, and her chains oppress her, but her greatest difficulty is the most objectionable affection which Monostatos cherishes for her. She struggles to escape his very unwelcome attentions, without much luck, until she is set free by the happy intervention of Papageno, whose presence is announced by his characteristic lilt in the orchestra. He and the Ethiop startle each other equally, and take to their heels in opposite directions, but when the harassed maiden calls for help, the feathered gentleman returns to comfort her with the news that her mother has dispatched to rescue her a handsome young man, who is already in love with her picture. Will she trust herself to him? The song which Papageno now introduces is so solid and comfortable and homelike, that the girl immediately puts herself in his hands, joins her voice to his and goes out with him as the curtain falls.

Another scene shows us what is happening to Tamino all this time. He is in a palm grove, standing somewhat uncertainly before three small temples, identical except for the different labels—REASON, NATURE, and WISDOM. His mystic guides have brought him thus far, but they don't know, or won't tell, at which door the prince ought to knock. He tries the temple on the left and a terrible voice from within cries, "*Zurück!*" (Go back!) On the right he meets with the same experience. Finally he goes to WISDOM, where he should have applied in the first place, and his knock is answered by a very magnificent priest, who asks politely what is wanted. When he hears that the applicant has arrived with intent to win the fair Pamina, he shrugs his shoulders, looks

perplexed, tells the prince that the girl is in the power of Sarastro, and then, forbidden by vows and duty to reveal more, conveniently disappears. Tamino is discouraged, and wonders if he ever will see his desire, and his winged guides from somewhere in the air comfort him by saying, "Now or never!"

To wile away the time, Tamino sits down and begins to play his flute, with the most delightful results. "Music hath charms" and all the "savage beasts" crawl from their lairs to fawn at the musician's feet, while strange fowls of the air gather on near-by trees. Tamino is delighted with his audience, but he has not for a moment forgotten the object of his quest. "Pamina!" he cries in mournful tones, and Echo, in the person of Papageno off-stage, answers the call. The Prince runs off to find his friend, but he runs the wrong way, for when he is gone Papageno and Pamina come on, rather in a hurry. They breathlessly sing of the advantages of good dependable feet like their own, and the bird-catcher calls Tamino, only to have his voice in turn echoed from off-stage.

The fugitives have paused too long to sing, for now the pursuing Monostatos arrives with his slaves and orders them overpowered forthwith. Papageno then for the first time remembers his *Glockenspiel* and puts it to the test. Nothing more pleasing could be imagined than the effect of the jingling notes, for the slaves and their leader give up at once their ferocious intentions and fall to dancing and singing in the most helpless, ridiculous and delightful manner. Papageno and Pamina enjoy the scene for a moment, then tremble with terror again, as with a flourish of trumpets, the mighty Sarastro rides on in his little chariot drawn by a pair of discouraged lions, accompanied by his imposing retinue. Pamina falls at his feet, begging forgiveness, and offering as excuse her wish to escape the attentions of Monostatos. The magnanimous sorcerer understands perfectly, and quite readily forgives, but he has nevertheless no intention of letting her go, for, as he says, a woman needs a man to tie to. Thereupon the angry Monostatos drags in Tamino, declaring him to be the thief of Pamina's love, and the two young people, although they have never laid eyes upon each other before, rush into each other's arms without reserve. Sarastro rewards Monostatos's diligence with a prescribed flogging, and for the lovers he has an elaborate plan. They must serve their probation in the temple before they can have what they want. Attendants bring forward veils for the novices' heads, and the two submit with docility to this or anything else which promises their ultimate union. To an ensemble in "canon" form, the curtain falls upon the act.

ACT II opens in a most entrancing forest of palm-trees, the trunks of which are silver and the fronds of gold. Eighteen seats are ranged about the stage, the center one being ornamented with a mystical pyramid and a black horn picked out in gold. There is furthermore a large and lifelike pyramid in the center of the background. Now at last we feel that we are in Egypt.

In a moment Sarastro and his priests enter with elaborate ceremony; and taking his place upon the most important seat, Sarastro tells the assembly that although they all have the enormous privilege of worshipping *Isis* and *Osiris*, nevertheless the temple is not as flourishing as it might be, and that a little new blood would be a desirable thing. Pamina and Tamino are even now waiting on the threshold eager to provide this very infusion, and therefore the priests will divide their attentions between the gods and the protection of the new oblates. He then proceeds to invoke his deities with the best solo in his evening's effort, "*O Isis and Osiris*," in which his voice, as some one has aptly said, rises like a column of incense above the grandiose and sustained chords of the orchestral accompaniment.

The curtain falls for a moment, and when it lifts we see the outer courtyard of the temple, and realize more fully what Sarastro meant about the temple's upkeep. Nothing seems to have been done toward it for a long time, broken columns and splintered pyramids lie about in neglect. One of this opera's many thunderstorms is brewing, while Tamino and Papageno are cowering in the shade of a thorn-tree, feeling far from happy or secure. They have removed their symbolic veils the better to exchange terrified confidences. In a moment a procession of torches lights up the scene with flickering flare, and the Sorcerer with his attendants solemnly arrives. One of the priests, the Speaker, puts the trembling Tamino through a gruelling Masonic questionnaire, and imposes certain conditions toward ultimate success, the most interesting being permission to see Pamina, without the privilege of speech with her. Then not forgetting the feathered pilgrim, one of the priests kindly promises Papageno, who obviously does not care a great deal about the Masons, something more to his taste, a nice wife, to be named Papagena.

Now suddenly the Three Sisters, whom we have not seen for some time, enter and precipitate a vocal struggle with the priests for the allegiance of Tamino and Papageno. They fail, however, in spite of their friendly services of the previous act, and retire in righteous indignation, as the elements howl and crash. When

the ladies have departed, the priests produce some more veils, and the candidates depart with them.

Another change of scene, and we have a semicircular rose-garden, with Pamina alluringly reclining upon a grassy bank, bathed in moonlight. While she sleeps, her *bête noire*, Monostatos, comes in and sits down to gloat upon her beauty, giving voice to a song, which, in spite of its evil origin, is delicately lovely and beguiling. On the last note his delicacy departs, however, and he strides towards the sleeper passionately; but before he can reach her, Mother, who has been chaperoning unseen, rises through the flower-bed and protects her child. The Moor hides in terror, and the Queen addresses her awakened daughter and presents her with a pretty golden dagger, with which she bids her despatch Sarastro at her earliest opportunity. It is, she states, the only way in which Tamino can be secured as husband. Pamina's gentle nature is appalled at such a deed of horror, but her stern parent will listen to no such nonsense, and bursts into an aria of startling brilliancy, wherein she professes that her blood boils with desire for vengeance, but her vocal inflections convey little of such emotion. Her voice flies upward in trills and runs and flute-like warblings in an hysterical effort to reach those very stars over which she claims dominion. It is one of the most difficult arias ever composed, and the artist who successfully negotiates its pyrotechnicalities, is a *rara avis*. Perhaps this very fact has caused the kindly librettist to direct that the singer shall sink into the earth as soon as she is done.

Pamina has paid very little attention to the excited apparition of her mother, and is still trembling over the thought of the murder which has been thrust upon her. To make things a little harder to bear, Monostatos comes in as usual. He has heard the whole thing, and tells her to hand the dagger over to him at once, which she does with a sigh of relief. No sooner has he got it than he threatens to take her life if she will not give him her love. Upon this interesting situation Sarastro very opportunely enters, and paying no attention to the Moor's tattling, informs Pamina benignly that she shall have her Tamino, if he can successfully pass through his various ordeals of initiation. To conclude the scene he voices a quite lovely and singer-proof aria of rebuke to the Queen of Night, "*In these serene halls is vengeance unknown.*" And the curtain falls.

There is no rest for the scene-shifter in this act—there are nine changes in all. The fourth shows us a sort of hall, decked with

garlands and furnished sparsely with benches. Papageno and Tamino arrive accompanied by two priests who tell them to wait here until they hear a trumpet. Left alone, the two men have hardly a moment before their trials begin. Papageno is the first victim. A grisly old hag arrives and declares him to be her lover, and begs him to drink from the goblet she carries. He does so obligingly, but straightway spits the water in her face in a most low-bred manner. We cannot blame her for leaving at once. Now we hear the fluttering wings in the orchestra, and the three Genii, or Guides, appear carrying a nicely decked little dinner-table, which they leave beside the candidates and withdraw. Papageno is hungry and proceeds to satisfy his middle-class appetite, so that when Pamina drifts gracefully on the scene, his mouth is too full to speak. Because of his vow Tamino also is silent and the lady nurses injured feelings in a pathetic lament, "*Ah, I feel that it is gone!*" She alludes to Tamino's regard for her, and bursts into tears as she leaves the stage. This has been a severe strain upon Tamino, but he has kept hold of himself, and now has the pleasure of hearing the trumpet tones which release him from the place. "Come!" he calls to the gourmandizing Papageno, who is having far too good a meal to leave and declares that even Sarastro's lions could not move him. It is a careless speech, for the vindictive animals appear immediately to test his words. It must be confessed that Papageno regrets his rashness. Only the notes of the magic flute can save him now. He and Tamino go off under its protection.

Another shift of scene. It is a vault in the pyramid, and Sarastro with his priests enter, bearing three-cornered lanterns, and chanting enthusiastically to *Isis* and *Osiris*. Apparently Tamino has been found worthy in their eyes and the final tests are imminent. The beset young man is brought in and presented to Pamina, heavily veiled. Before they can say a word of greeting, they are informed that they must part forever, and they take the edict seriously and sing the most heavenly music of farewell. Sarastro, probably a trifle ashamed of himself for torturing them in this unnecessary fashion, gives just a little hint of better things in store, as he dismisses them.

Now Papageno, with small respect for the proprieties, appears loudly calling for Tamino. He is somewhat abashed for a moment in the presence of all these clergy, but when they offer him a wish, he asks for wine with which to wash down the meal from which he was so rudely torn. A cup appears from nowhere, and he drinks with perfect confidence. Emboldened, he now thinks

he would like a wife, and when the old hag to whom he was so discourteous in a previous scene, appears to wed him, he swallows hard, but decides to accept the inevitable. As a reward for such philosophy, she is straightway transformed into something quite young and beautiful by the name of Papagena, and her rags fall away to show that she also is dressed in the neatest and jauntiest of feather costumes. With a cry of pleasure, Papageno starts to embrace her, but she is whisked from his reach. He has not yet proved his mettle. But at least he has something to work for now.

A short scene now carries us back to the garden, where the love-lorn Pamina is about to plunge the magic dagger in her own heart rather than endure life another instant alone, but the three Genii appear suddenly and bid her dry her tears, with promises to lead her to her lover.

Another effort of the by this time apoplectic scene-shifter, and we have an amazing view of two mountains, one covered with rushing cataracts, the other glowing with fire. In a moment Tamino is led in by two knights in sable armor, visors down, and holding flaming swords. It is his final trial, but the poor fellow has gone through so much by this time that he is almost apathetic. The knights read in solemn voice an inscription written on a stone, "Who pursues this path of danger becometh pure by fire, water, earth, and air; who can overcome the terrors of death and rise to heaven out of earth will then be purified and able to devote himself to the Mysteries of Isis."

The two knights sing their address to Tamino in earnest religious accents strongly reminiscent of one of Luther's hymns, the anachronistic use of which does not seem to disturb Mozart in the least. And he is right. Probably in no other way could he obtain an effect so solemn, so impressive, so doctrinal.

Now a diversion occurs in the fluttering arrival of Pamina, who has evidently taken the Genii at their word and sought her lover without delay. She flies into his arms and declares herself ready to accompany him wherever he goes. Neither the fiery furnace, nor the rushing torrents deter her, so all four set out at once. We watch the lovers successfully negotiate all the elements, and finally with a soul-satisfying crash the mountains remove, as the Bible says they will if we have faith, and Tamino and Pamina are seen standing safe and sound in a temple, and very properly giving thanks.

Next we are shown a garden where Papageno, playing a pipe, endeavors to lure the charming Papagena in his direction. Having

no success, he decides to die, and is preparing a noose for himself, when the Genii arrive as usual with pleasant news, and ask him why on earth he never uses his little *Glockenspiel* any more. "Sure enough!" cries Papageno, and rings his bells furiously. In a trice his pretty little feathered mate dances on to the pleasing tintinnabulation, and together they go off singing the most delightful duet about their own amusing names.

For a final flourish all the powers of evil and darkness now appear. The furious Queen of the Night comes in, followed by her sympathetic attendants, screaming that she will have vengeance, will give her child to Monostatos if necessary, and will burn down Sarastro's temple! We cannot but wonder just why she is disturbed, for things seem to have gone very much as she planned in the first place. But women are ever unreasonable, and colorature queens temperamental.

At any rate she gets small satisfaction for all her ravings, for in the very ultimate scene, a glorious interior of the Temple of the Sun, we behold Sarastro sitting securely upon his splendid throne, and beside him we discover the chastened and radiant lovers, now promoted to whatever exalted station among Masons their ambitions craved. Every one is there in festal attire, the three Genii folding their wings and meekly holding armfuls of flowers. This inspiring tableau is too much for Her Nocturnal Majesty, and with a scream of defiant rage, she and her retinue sink from sight, while the apostles of light chant virtuously under the falling curtain.

MANON

By JULES MASSENET

First Sung at the Opéra Comique, Paris, 1884

THERE are two operas built upon the legend of the beautiful Manon Lescaut, but for the limited space of this book, that of Massenet, doubtless the popular favorite, has been chosen. The story is simply and appealingly told, the stage tableaux brilliant and picturesque. No wonder it is the idol of Massenet's compatriots. In Paris, where it figures on almost weekly opera bills, the house is always sold out. When one protests vainly at the box office the reply and the shrug are always the same—"*Mais, que voulez-vous, c'est 'Manon' !*"

ACT I shows the courtyard of an Inn at Amiens. Two gay gentlemen who should be attending to weightier matters, de Brétigny, a rich nobleman, and his friend, Guillot de Morfontain, Minister of Finance and a famous Don Juan, are entertaining three chorus girls, Rosette, Pousette and Javotte. They are discussing merrily what they shall eat and drink, and they go inside just as the courtyard is filled with confusion incident to the arrival of the mail coach. The usual loiterers gather and the travelers appear, among them Lescaut, an officer in the Royal Guards, who has come to meet his cousin, Manon. She is on the Arras coach which now arrives, adding to the confusion and noise, every sort of traveler and their impedimenta making the scene a hubbub.

Finally the crowds diminish and we behold Manon standing, uncertain what to do. She is young, very beautiful, dressed quaintly, and surrounded by bandboxes. She is timid, but not shy—not in the least. By a process of elimination she and her dashing cousin finally discover each other, and she offers her lips in cousinly greeting, then begs his pardon, although she need not. Lescaut was quite willing to meet her half-way, and finds her charming. But Manon, very tremulous and talkative, tells him at length how dazed she feels and of all her varied impressions during her journey in the coach. All through her impetuous re-

cital we hear introduced Manon's own musical phrase, which will haunt her and her movements throughout the opera, always easily recognizable in all its modulations. Later when you think of Manon at all, you will always think of this "little tune." It is unforgettable.

All is quiet again after the departure of the coach. Lescaut goes off to look for his cousin's luggage, but scarcely has he gone than the impressionable Guillot comes out on the balcony, and seeing Manon, begins at once to make advances. Manon may be from the country, but she is no fool. This bibulous gentleman, prating from the balcony of his riches and his infatuation, seems ridiculous to her. She laughs boldly, and the three chorus girls, with Brétigny, hearing laughter, come out also on the balcony to join the merriment. They are convulsed when the appearance of Cousin Lescaut puts a sudden damper on Guillot's overtures. The officer, seeing with satisfaction that his young cousin can look after herself, thinks he can allow himself a few moments in the tavern with his friend, and cautioning her to discretion, goes off.

Manon sweetly and docilely drops her eyes, and when he is gone, tries to discipline herself. After all, she is going to a convent—she ought to begin at once to lose interest in worldly affairs. But those chorus girls—how *chic* they look and how gay! She, Manon, would like a life of luxury and pleasure such as theirs—but what is she thinking of? No more visions for poor Manon, but the convent door!

This renunciation is all very well, but the approach of a dashing young officer, Des Grieux, who is looking for his father, recalls her to the world without difficulty. (Des Grieux also has a little theme which follows him about, for he is the hero of the opera.) He is of an age and temperament to be easily impressed. Seeing beneath the tree a young girl, alone, more than ordinarily attractive, less than ordinarily discreet in smiles and blushes, he boldly approaches, and losing no time, expresses his admiration openly. Is Manon offended? Not she! This is life! This fellow is young, handsome, eloquent, desirable. She regrets that she cannot match his flow of compliments, but she tells him her name quite readily, and waits for more compliments, more ecstasies. She is emboldened to confide that her family, hopeless of restraining her love of gayety, are finally shipping her to a convent. "That is the story of Manon Lescaut!" she says simply.

Des Grieux cannot see such an outrage—fancy such a girl a nun! He is anxious to add more interesting chapters to her story. He will snatch her from Lady Church—will never leave her.

The simple little country mouse responds with the sophistication of the ages. She capitulates almost too quickly. Love at first sight is one thing, but Des Grieux should suspect such easy victory. However, ways and means for flight are at hand. The carriage ordered by old Guillot drives up and Manon, the opportunist, never hesitates—they will take it themselves—to Paris! It will be an amusing joke on Guillot. After a charming duet about their life together in Paris, they spring into the carriage and drive away. The confounding of old Guillot when he discovers the trick and vows revenge, and the contrition and rage of Lescaut, who, far from sober, rushes in too late, furnish intense amusement to the various loiterers about the place, and to Pousette, Rosette, and Javotte on their balcony, as the curtain falls.

ACT II. Manon and Des Grieux are established in Paris in a charming little apartment on the Rue Vivienne. Their living-room is dainty, rococo, inviting. At a little desk sits Des Grieux, writing a letter which Manon—and what a changed Manon, all silks and furbelows, modishly coifed, more beautiful than ever—is, womanlike, very curious to read. In fact, without leave, she has looked over his shoulder. So they read it together, in the lovely *Letter Duet*, a melody quite as ravishingly beautiful as the charms of Manon which the words describe. This epistle to Des Grieux, Senior, is by way of preparing him for the marriage. Manon arches her brows at that—isn't love enough? But her lover is firm. He wants her all his own, his wife. Kissing her, he seals the letter and goes out to mail it. On the threshold he stops: he has noticed a large vase of roses which *he* did not buy—Heaven knows his allowance is too limited for that! Manon's ready tongue says some one threw them in at the window, and she hopes he is not jealous. Des Grieux, credulous and trusting, kisses her again.

Presently a maid announces Cousin Lescaut and another officer. When the two men enter we recognize through his disguise our old friend of the Inn, de Brétigny. Lescaut is in a rage and threatens Des Grieux for having sullied the family honor, but the lover is unconcerned in the face of Manon's terror and her irascible relative's displeasure. He calmly produces the letter which he has just written, wherein marriage is so strikingly featured, and peace descends.

As the two read the letter by the window, Manon, evidently on friendly terms with de Brétigny, inquires why the disguise, and he tells her he had to see her immediately and personally to break

the news that Papa Des Grieux is planning to abduct his son and heir this very afternoon. "No, he shall be warned," whispers the excited girl. "Don't be absurd, Manon! Let him go, otherwise the allowance will stop, and you know you never could stand poverty. Come with me and you shall realize all your dreams. The queen will be no more splendid than you!" plots the perfidious gentleman. And Manon *hesitates*. It seems impossible, but she does. How disillusioning, we begin to feel! How skin-deep is beauty! What a weak sister is our heroine! Some one has compared her to a frail white water-lily, floating with the tide, radiant and fragrant, but without roots.

Now her cousin comes back, very jovial and cordial over the marriage arrangements, and declaring himself perfectly delighted with everything and everybody, calls de Brétigny and they depart, leaving a troubled Manon with her blissful lover. It is supper-time and the famous letter is yet unposted. He hurries out on this errand, as servants bring in and arrange the table for their meal. As soon as she is alone Manon approaches the table. Evidently she has made up her mind, for at sight of the two places so cozily laid she bursts into tears and sings the pitiful "*Good-by to our dear little table.*" It is terribly sad to leave it, but apparently not sad enough to deter her.

Des Grieux finds her in inexplicable tears, and to divert her tells her, as they sit at supper, of a dream he has had. There was a little house in a garden, which would have been like a corner of Heaven, only she was not there. "It was just a dream, such as we all have," she breaks in, a little frightened. "Maybe—but *you* can make it real. Let us spend our lives there together!" he ends passionately the exquisite song which is one of the most beautiful jewels of the entire score.

A rude knock interrupts them. Something warns Manon that the hour has struck. She utters a little scream and begs him, in a moment of weakness, not to go, but he laughs. Sure enough, he goes to the outer door and he never returns. With dilated eyes Manon listens to the faint sounds of struggle, then watching from the window exclaims, "Oh, my poor Chevalier!"—but that is all she does about it. The curtain falls.

ACT III. This is the *Cours la Reine* scene, which is often omitted from performances, its one special ornament, *Manon's Gavotte*—in which she urges herself and every one else to enjoy life while young, as one is not always twenty—being sometimes interpolated elsewhere. The purpose of the scene is to show

Manon a veritable queen in the fashionable demi-monde which frequents the *Cours*, disporting herself like a painted lily among her courtiers and followers. The Count Des Grieux, father of her late deserted lover, has entered with de Brétigny, probably from curiosity to see what his son escaped. He explains his presence in Paris by the fact that Des Grieux, Junior, has become an Abbé at St. Sulpice and that he is on his way to hear his son's first sermon. Strangely enough, the old gentleman, having beheld Manon in all glory, is quite resentful of de Brétigny for having broken up the affair, and yet he cannot blame him, he adds, watching her with relish. Like son, like father, we see! Manon, though apparently occupied with her own affairs, has overheard. She sends de Brétigny away and approaches Des Grieux père, and soon learns the worst—that her lover, although he has not forgotten her, has managed to heal his wound. The Count and his friends retire, and Manon looks around, troubled. Then in a moment she makes up her mind and orders her chair. When Cousin Lescaut hears the address given, he can hardly believe his ears. "To St. Sulpice!"

The scene changes to the parlors of the St. Sulphice Seminary, and the room is filled by the usual buzzing of female admiration over the sermon just preached by our youthful Abbé Des Grieux. His father enters unnoticed and listens with a quizzical smile. When the hero comes in he congratulates him rather sarcastically, but speaking from the heart, advises him not to take his final vows. Marriage and the world are the thing, especially as tomorrow he is to receive his maternal heritage, a matter of some thirty thousand pounds. Leaving this food for his son's thoughts, the worldly gentleman departs. But the young man has been too hurt by the world. He has made his decision. He even tries to blot from his mind the very haunting memory of a certain pretty face. His song, "*Ah, fuyez, douce image*," is sung by tenors great and small all over the world. Just as he turns to go back to holier meditations the very "*douce image*" herself appears, radiant, lovely, her glittering dress but half veiled by a long cloak.

In the following scene she, desiring always the thing just beyond her grasp, fights to regain his heart, humbling herself, begging, weeping, imploring. Alas, his heart is and always has been hers. It is only his conscience she has to vanquish! Shocked at her worldly pleas under this virtuous roof, he turns a deaf ear. But when she seizes his hand and sings, "*Do you not remember the touch of Manon's hands?*" it is too much for him. The bell to prayer may ring in vain; he will go with Manon!

ACT IV. Manon could scarcely have known of her lover's heritage when she lured him back to her, but certainly it has proved convenient. Great has been her gayety, great has been his fall. They are at a famous gambling hall. Cousin Lescaut is for the moment winning, and the jealous players sing a warning verse, while the insistent cries of the *croupiers*, the laughter and dancing and movement, make a scene of diverting brilliance. Rosette, Pousette and Javotte are there, devoting themselves to Lescaut, like bees around a honey-pot, trying to find out his method. He tells them in a rollicking song in which we can hear the clink of coins in the orchestra, that the Queen of Spades is his lady love. Manon, finding herself alone with Des Grieux for a moment, urges him to play hard and recoup the fortune she has already spent, and asks coyly if she still has his heart. Poor Des Grieux is sorely tried—he hates her and adores her—she is so shallow, so mad for pleasure—and the worst of it is the madder she becomes the more he loves her. She is a Sphinx, a Siren! Inspired by Lescaut's luck he tries his against Guillot, with a heavy stake held by Lescaut. Manon is thrilled and excited—this is life again, this is meat and drink! As she watches the game, she blithely carols her *Hymn to Pleasure*.

Des Grieux is winning—too rapidly. Guillot, jealous anyway from other causes, accuses him of cheating, and relations rapidly become strained. Just as the eruption occurs, when the crowds are siding with Guillot, and Des Grieux and Manon are about to go, there comes an ominous knock. The police appear. A raid! Guillot accuses Des Grieux of cheating and to complete his revenge, names Manon as his accomplice.

The young man's fighting blood is up. He will throw them all out of the window. "Including me?" says Papa sweetly, suddenly appearing from nowhere in time to buy off his scapegrace son. But there is no one to redeem poor Manon! Her crown is in the dust. She will share the fate of all Daughters of Joy, and no one will lend a hand. None of her old friends will help her, least of all Des Grieux *père*. At least her lover is loyal. He seizes her in his arms and tries to defend her, as she swoons.

ACT V is the approach to the docks at Havre, where the ship is waiting to deport Manon and a score of her undesirable sisterhood. Des Grieux, beside himself with grief, is hiding, waiting for a chance for a last good-by and perhaps rescue, but Lescaut, joining him, tells him that all plans for the latter have fallen through. Poor Des Grieux, half mad and desperate, turns on

Lescaut at this, but is stopped by the voices of the approaching soldiers. It is all Lescaut can do to restrain the young man from falling upon them all single-handed. Finally the little group appears, the sergeant singing of the small glory he finds in such assignments. From the soldiers' remarks, the two listeners gather that Manon, not used to hardships, is on the point of death. So Lescaut, on the strength of his relationship, has a little talk with the officer, and soon Manon is permitted to appear. She is about to fall when Des Grieux rushes out and catches her in his arms. How woebegone she looks in her rough clothes and her rags! The dainty feet are bruised, her lovely hair tangled, and her cheeks pale as death. Their reunion is all the sweeter, however, now that there is no mask of worldliness on her face; it is illumined by the only real love she has ever had in her vapid, silly, frail existence. Tenderly they sing of the old, happy days together, the Inn yard, the dear little table, the awful hours at St. Sulpice—and Des Grieux promises her more blissful hours to come, when she will be his wife.

Manon cannot grasp this, however. She feels but half awake, strangely numb, strangely tired. She thinks she may be dying, but even to the end she will be a coquette. She smiles wanly as she calls the first evening star a jewel—a diamond!

Des Grieux hears footsteps approaching. "Come, let us fly!" he cries to Manon.

But it is too late. She is too exhausted, too weary. "No, farewell, this kiss must be my farewell," she sobs. "*Do you not remember the touch of Manon's little hand?*" she whispers, as the orchestra recalls the pleading at St. Sulpice. Suddenly the end comes. Just as she breathes her last in her lover's arms, she gasps sadly her old words, "This is the story of Manon Lescaut."

The curtain falls on the lamentations of Des Grieux.

THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

By WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

First Produced in Vienna, 1786

MOZART is the first composer of opera who ever conceived the idea that his characters might be human beings. Heretofore they had been gods and goddesses, the shadowy denizens of the world of classic myth. Mozart, however, was young and high-spirited, and his blood coursed warmly, merrily through his veins, so very naturally he bent his genius to interpret all the diverting people and things which touched his brief and inspired existence. He died, you know, at thirty-five! Although his own life was at times far from gay, his creative imagination was never curbed. His exuberance, his spontaneity, his humor, will probably remain unequaled. No more delightful experience in any theater can be enjoyed than a hearing of the *Marriage of Figaro*. It sings, it dances, it chuckles, it sighs, or fairly laughs aloud, in marvelous unity of action and music. Events press one another upon the stage sometimes to our bewilderment, but we do not care. There is an ebullieny in the orchestra which proves contagious to singers and audience, so that the four lively acts unroll all too fast. The plot is the involved sequel to the complications displayed in the *Barber of Seville*, and all the familiar characters appear.

The Prelude is a scampering, mischievous debate among the orchestral instruments concerning what is about to happen. When it is but fairly started we know we are in for an evening of merry, mad intrigue, absurd situations, with a rollicking *dénoûment*.

The curtain rises to show a half-empty room in the villa of the Count of Almaviva, who has long since wed the sprightly Rosina of Seville, and who has rewarded his humble ally, Figaro the barber, with the position of Major-domo in his household. The latter is discovered upon the stage, carefully measuring the apartment, for it has been given him for himself and Susanna, the maid of the Countess, when their imminent marriage shall have taken

place. The girl herself is there, but more interested in a new bonnet than in *centimètres*. She very saucily comments upon the nearness of the rooms to the Count's personal suite. There will be a constant ringing of summoning bells (*Din, din, don, don!*) Figaro admits, but his fiancée opines that it is located with reference to the Count's convenience in addressing himself to *her*, and merrily confesses his infatuation. She goes out, leaving an irate Figaro singing a most melodious defiance of his master.

He is interrupted by the entrance of our old friend Marcellina, and her master, Bartolo, the trouble-makers of the other opera. Now they are still the disturbing element. Presumably during the course of the *Barber of Seville*, Figaro imprudently borrowed money from the old lady, pledging himself in marriage, as security. The note is due, and here she is, aided and abetted by her master, who certainly is entitled to a grudge against the barber. His vindictive song upon the subject leaves no doubt in our mind as to his intentions. The orchestra seems for the moment to sympathize with him. But Susanna, entering with arms full of lingerie, has heard enough to stir her resentment, and she questions Marcellina's right of way through the door with impertinent and rather ill-bred behavior, while the orchestra maintains a laughing and neutral attitude. She wins in the end and is left in possession of the field.

Almost at once an adorable person named Cherubino pokes his curly head inquiringly through the doorway. He is the page of the household, and its most lovable inmate. Incidentally he is usually very pretty, and of an effeminate jauntiness, for "he" is a rôle eagerly sought for by the *soubrettes* of the company. He is always in some sort of scrape, and just now merely because he was caught under a table kissing Barbarina, a village minx, the Count has threatened to banish him. He desperately pleads for Susanna's intercession with his master, for banishment would break his ardent heart. Cherubino is in the throes of a romantic calf-love for his noble mistress, and as he teases the maid, he slyly removes a ribbon from the Countess' garments and presses it sentimentally to his heart. Susanna tries to get it from him but he eludes her, promises to pay for it with a song he has composed, and finally scurries to a hiding-place behind a big chair just as the Count enters.

The handsome gentleman is decidedly piqued by Susanna's evident confusion. He still further perturbs her by announcing his intention of taking Figaro away to London, and in the same breath begging her to meet him in the garden after dusk. Be-

fore he can voice any more indiscretions, Basilio, the old singing master, comes in, and the Count steps around the chair to hide. Cherubino, with shaking knees, manages to slide around the other side and curls up in the chair, where Susanna promptly covers him with a cloak she was carrying. A ripple of discreet laughter in the audience is permitted.

Basilio has come on mischief bent. He has heard that Cherubino has had the impertinence to lift his saucy young eyes to his mistress, yet all the while playing with the hearts of lesser ladies. The Count, although himself a fairly versatile philanderer, can tolerate no such behavior in his wife. He stalks from his hiding-place and rants and thunders magnificent indignation. Basilio, perfectly charmed with the result of his gossiping, pretends contrition, but the orchestra will not lie, it laughs delightedly with him as he makes his solemn excuses. Susanna, however, is really upset, and her broken utterances seem to inflame the Count's admiration while soothing his feelings. He smiles on her while he pronounces the page's banishment. "Why the boy is a perfect imp! Yesterday I casually lifted my table-cloth like this. . . ." He illustrates his words by lifting the cloak on the chair, and there sits Cherubino himself, looking very red and uncomfortable, but almost bursting with amusement. Susanna finds herself compromised, the Count is more furious than ever, and Basilio beside himself with satisfaction. A wonderful trio expresses their various emotions, while Susanna and the page cut it short with perfectly futile explanations.

In the midst of all this Figaro comes breezily in, full of plans for his wedding, but on having the present situation explained to him joins with Susanna in pleading for leniency toward the boy. The Count, a little softened, commutes the sentence to service as petty-officer in his regiment, the period of enlistment starting at once, and goes out with Basilio. The remainder of the act is taken up with poor Cherubino's despair and Figaro's paternal efforts to lighten his gloom. Mozart has made Cherubino a real boy, in spite of his female interpreter, and Figaro hits by chance upon the one consoling aspect of his sentence. After all, it is a fine thing to be a soldier, with a dressy little uniform, and the women fairly swarming about one! To the tune of a perfectly delightful toy *marche militaire*, the enthusiastic barber puts the boy through a spirited little drill, and finally, arm in arm, leads him off with tremendous manly strides as the curtain falls. . .

ACT II shows us one of the splendid rooms of Almaviva's house,

where his wife is sitting at her embroidery, in solitary splendor. As she works, she thinks, and her thoughts are melancholy. Evidently, according to her wistful aria, "*Porgi amor*," she has had a pretty difficult time keeping her husband interested from the moment he married her and was sure of her. But according to the contrariness of heart affairs, she finds him the more attractive. When the sprightly Susanna enters, she decides to make a confidante of the maid, and three heads being better than two, they call in Figaro's nimble wits. The *factotum* is never at a loss, and now he suggests an assignation between Susanna and the Count, with the imp, Cherubino, to dress and play the rôle of the maid.

The Countess has never bestowed much attention on the boy, so has him sent for to see if he meets with her approval. He comes in led by Susanna, blushing, awkward, shyly radiant to be at last in the presence of his adored one. It is his big opportunity. Pulling from his pocket the manuscript of his song, after a little bashful hesitation, he sings for the ladies his *Voi che sapete*. Cherubino must have been an embryo genius, for no more captivating song, take it measure for measure, has ever been written. *Prime donne* have sung it in concert halls, girls have warbled it at the piano in the front parlor, violins have adorned it, phonographs have immortalized it, but its place is in the throat of an eager, ardent youngster, trembling and sentimentally plaintive with the pangs of his first ridiculous infatuation. As such it is inimitable.

When he is done, and has recovered his choking breath, Susanna measures his height, cautiously locks the door, and then brings out some female garments for him to try on. The Countess, pleased to be gracious to the boy, tries a be-ribboned cap over his curls, and finds him adorable. As for Susanna, she kisses him roundly and prophesies that he will break many hearts in his day. Cherubino has been kneeling at his lady's feet. As he rises the lace upon his wrist falls back and reveals the bit of ribbon which he purloined a while ago, and which he is wearing like a talisman. The Countess, recognizing it, administers some charming reproof, in the midst of which a knock is heard. This will be the Count, and his wife, uncertain of his consideration at best, fears that this may be a compromising scene, and sends the page scampering to hide in the dressing-room. Probably the very worst thing she could do! The Count comes in blustering, he seems to scent some intrigue, and Cherubino, doubtless with anxious ear to key-hole, is so terrified that he upsets his chair with a bang.

The Count is alert at once. "Please explain!" he insists with beetling brows.

"It must be Susanna!" gasps his spouse, then is horrified to see the maid just entering from another door. But this super-servant takes in the situation with astonishing intelligence, and keeps out of sight. In the meantime the wrathful lord storms and pounds upon the door, demanding Susanna. His wife plays up and calls to the girl to remain where she is. Cherubino says nothing. We can imagine him on the other side giggling with delighted terror at the situation. Finally the Count goes off to fetch a crow-bar or a locksmith, and for safety's sake takes his wife along. As soon as their backs are turned, out pops the frantic page and in pops the dutiful Susanna in order to be found just where she is expected to be. Cherubino loses his head completely, runs somewhat wildly around the apartment bumping into chairs and tables, and at last, finding no other means of egress, leaps frantically right through the big French window, his slippers falling off, his coat tails flying.

So, when the Count, having worked himself up to a pitch of violence, returns and bursts open the boudoir door, there stands the demure Susanna, and the Countess almost faints from sheer relief. For a moment or two they all sing lustily, he of his chagrin—for he was really rather enjoying his opportunity to bluster, and the two women of their mischievous delight at his consternation. To a flow of utterly delightful orchestral raillery, they rub in his defeat, until in self-defense he mumbles an apology and the Countess graciously consents to forgive.

Figaro, happening to enter at this moment, is the unfortunate recipient of all his master's pent-up spleen, and because the Count saw through his silly letter, is told that marriage to Marcellina is to be his punishment. But Figaro is an unquenchable optimist, and only grins. At this moment, Antonio, the gardener, comes in querulously, holding a broken flower-pot and complaining bitterly that "the gentry" are always throwing all sorts of things out of windows, but that this time they threw out a man, and he broke his pet geranium. The minds of the two ladies flash the guilty thought, "Cherubino!" and the Count, noticing their too obvious concern, shows interest, asks more details. But Figaro, as always, to the rescue. Why, he, in a hurry, just went downstairs that way.

"Well," says the gardener, scratching his empty pate, "you've grown much in an hour; this was a little man!"

"Pouf, I crouch when I leap, idiot! Besides, I am lame!" The friendly orchestra obligingly confirms this—limps, hobbles, stumbles.

But the gardener is stubborn. These papers fell from the man's pocket. The Countess sees with horror that it is the page's commission, which he so proudly showed her a while ago and which she noticed was without seals. She whispers a sly word in the barber's ear. "Why, of course, that young jackanapes' papers! I was on my way to get them stamped!" lies Figaro loyally. The gardener goes grumbling off with the corpse of his geranium, and the Count, but half convinced, is forced to yield for the moment, as the stage is rudely invaded by that unpleasant trio, Basilio, Bartolo and Marcellina, all noisily demanding from Figaro matrimony or financial satisfaction. The Count, savoring his judicial importance, agrees to give the matter some of his valuable thought, and the curtain falls upon his restored prestige, and the distracted and guilty murmurings of his womenfolk.

ACT III. Now the plot is thickening so that it will take some patience to penetrate it. On the rise of the curtain we behold our Count pacing up and down in the midst of a very grand salon, but giving no thought whatever to the expensive decorations; he has other more agitating mental processes. The truth is that he feels he has gone a bit far with Susanna, and he has reason to fear that unless heavily subsidized, she will give him away in the very quarter least desirable. He quite realizes that Susanna is playing for a price, and that price her marriage with the brilliant barber. The Count, like many another human, does not want some one else to have what is denied him, and so resolves to block the matrimonial plans. When the charming girl happens to pass through the room to fetch some gewgaw for her mistress, he impressively announces to her that she has cause for worry, he has decided to withhold her dowry, and Figaro will beyond a doubt be forced to the altar with old Marcellina. When in doubt, opera heroines always sing some of their loveliest music, and so now the harassed Susanna begins the most popular duet of the entire score, "*Crudel, perche*," in which she decides it is better policy to prolong her flirtation with her noble lover a bit longer until some other solution suggests itself. This she proceeds to do, with the greatest possible aid from an orchestra which emphasizes her every demure glance, or sly, coquettish toss of head. The Count, with whom to pursue is an intoxication, throws resolution to the winds

and comes thundering after. Before he knows it he has planned another tryst under the orange-trees of the garden, and goes off singing unctuously of his satisfaction therewith.

Figaro enters at once, and Susanna, a little overanxious to share the joke, blurts the delicious news somewhat too soon. The Count was plainly visible in the wings, of course heard the whole thing, and when they have gone off, comes back to tell us in his aria, "*Vedro mentr' io sospiro*," how Latin is his blood, how hot his passions, and how not to be trifled with is his determination for vengeance swift and sure. On his soaring peroration enter Marcellina, Bartolo, and a legal officer, with Figaro, who is for once overwhelmed in gloom. The Alcalde declares from his legal eminence that the barber must pay up or wed the plaintiff, which announcement, fitting the Count's mood like a glove, elicits great applause.

Figaro, however, is not vanquished yet; he claims protection from some obsolete law which requires consent of a man's parents to his matrimonial intentions. And where are his parents? That is the question. Playing for time, he describes a certain birth-mark he bears. Even he is surprised, however, at the result of this innocent announcement. Marcellina and Bartolo straightway recognize him as their son! What a *dénoûment*! The dialogue here is a bit racy, but what we understand of it—the repeated, amazed exclamations of, "His mother?! His father?!" with its accompanying mirth and surprise in the orchestra—is an effect absolutely entrancing. The Count is greatly annoyed, Figaro delighted and relieved, the parents sentimentally emotional. The *sextet* ends with Figaro in the arms of his Mamma. Of course, everything now being happily straightened out, Susanna has to come in and, to complicate things sufficiently for another act, behold her bridegroom in the act of embracing her rival. She and the orchestra promptly box his ears. Marcellina, however, under the softening effect of mother-love, explains the whole thing quite simply and sweetly in the midst of all the excitement, upon which the Count and the Alcalde retire in disgust, and the others rush out to impart the really extraordinary news to their friends.

Now Cherubino and Barbarina scuttle across the stage. There is mischief afoot, we gather from their giggles and exclamations. The naughty page is going to dress like a girl and go to a party of village maidens. With a last rippling laugh they run off hand in hand as the Countess walks on in all the dignity of her beauty and her broken heart. Sighing like an accordion, she sings her lovely aria, "*Dove sono*," a lament entirely in the difficult, serene classic

style, in which she reviews the dear dead delights of her honeymoon, the sad passage of years, and most bitter of all, the dalliance of her lord and master. We are sorry for her, but if she must suffer in order to offer us something so utterly beautiful as this *Andante*, far be it from us to wish her relief. However, in spite of our unfeeling attitude, she does cheer up a bit in the following *Allegro*, and calls in her lively accomplice, Susanna, to concoct one last scheme toward the Count's undoing. She has thought it a good idea (although overworked in operas) to change clothes with her maid, meet her husband at the tryst, and then see what will happen. To that end she dictates a letter for Susanna to write, and we have one of the most charming, evanescent, and delicate of extant musical inspirations, the famous *Letter Duet*. Even in that house of no encores, the Metropolitan Opera, this cannot get by, and all *prime donne*, be they never so great, are compelled to write that letter twice.

The completed note is fastened by a pin, which the recipient is to return as a token, and Susanna hides the missive in her dress just as a band of singing, festive village girls come gayly in without knocking, dance rompingly around the stage and present the Countess with a garland of flowers. At the head of the troupe is Barbarina, hand in hand with a little hoyden, extremely pretty, extremely *gauche*. It is, of course, our friend Cherubino, whom no one else recognizes for the moment. The great lady kisses the awkward girl, and the page blushes violently and vows never to wash that spot. But the Count, always appearing at the wrong moment, enters, sees with a penetrating eye, pulls off the boy's wig, and declares his wife compromised. Cherubino is in for something unpleasant now, but the sentimental baby is too happy over his kiss to care for anything else. Barbarina begs to have him as her husband. But whether she gets him or not we are left in doubt, for Figaro enters, hustles all the young people away, and hints broadly that a horse and a soldier's cap are waiting for the new recruit upon the road to Seville.

Now the first maneuvers of the wedding celebration take place. The Count and Countess go to their dais, and the peasantry come to pay their respects, and to crown Susanna with her veil and wreath. All their friends and old and new relations are here, and so the *finale* of the act transpires. Susanna, with shocking disregard of the conventions, manages, while kneeling for his blessing, to pass the guilty letter to the Count, who pricks himself with the pin, and utters unseemly protests. He is most careful to preserve the token, however, to the great interest of the

observant Figaro, who watches him all through the ensuing ballet. After a diverting *Fandango* is displayed to the company, the Count musically and graciously dismisses his guests (enviable prerogative!) and promising yet more enjoyable festivities at his convenience, allows the curtain to terminate the act.

In ACT IV we see the garden, dreamy and exotic in the blue moonlight. There are two arbors, to right and left, placed we suspect for the convenience of imminent and complicated action. Just now the only occupant of the stage is little Barbarina, who has been intrusted with the delivery of the Count's pin, and has lost it. She is searching desperately, and weeping with utter and moist abandon. It would seem that the composer, out of sympathy for her infantile grief, has given her sobs and chokings a very prominent place indeed, but it doubtless amused him as a more sincere emotion than some of the adult ravings. Figaro now happens by and hears an ingenuous account of the pin, and its significance. After he has helped her find it and sent her off happy once more, he realizes his own dilemma. Of course he thinks the assignation is from Susanna, and to confirm his suspicions remembers the affair of the letter during the recent ceremony. Marcellina, passing conveniently, receives the full force of his righteous wrath, but with woman's wit suspects some joke, and sending him away coldly comforted, decides to wait and warn Susanna. While waiting, she is allowed to sing a fine but uncomplimentary aria which compares the affections of humans unfavorably with those of the animals. Perhaps she really only wanted to sing, for now she goes off immediately, as Barbarina, a basket of sweets on her arm, enters gayly and goes into the arbor on the left to await Cherubino.

Now enter Basilio and Bartolo, of whom by this time we feel we have seen quite enough. Even a comic song about the Devil cannot compensate us for their continued presence. Figaro joins them, still raving of jealousy and suspicion, and bursts into a splendid song of good advice to deluded husbands. Just as he finishes, the Countess and her maid enter, dressed in each other's clothes. They have been warned by Marcellina of the strained atmosphere, and are ready for anything.

From now on all is very confusing. As the Count and Figaro advance, and chide or embrace the wrong wives, things are further complicated by the blithe appearance in their midst of Cherubino, on his way to Barbarina and the left-hand arbor. In the *mêlée*, blows, embraces and diamond rings seem to be exchanged

indiscriminately, and entrances and exits of the wrong individuals or couples into the wrong arbors are continuous. It is useless to try to follow all the intricacies of their playfulness, their rage, or their *amours*, as the case may be. It is enough to enjoy the rippling, panting, delightful music, and to watch the colorful movement upon the stage. Eventually the excitement reaches rather too high a pitch, and Susanna, looking like the Countess, kneels and is refused consideration, while, in another moment the Countess, looking like Susanna, succeeds in calming the storm, and restoring connubial bliss to the three very shaken-up pairs of lovers whose capricious affairs we have been following for over three delightful hours.

The curtain.

MARTHA

By FRIEDRICH VON FLOTOW

First Produced in Vienna, 1847

"MARTHA" has the unique distinction of being an opera of the French school, written by a German and usually sung in Italian. Do not, however, let such complications affect you, for even if every other opera ever written proves a bore, this one you are bound to enjoy, unless you are uncompromisingly "highbrow." You and all the characters will have a most amusing and delightful time from the rise of the curtain. There is plenty of action, no bloodshed, scarcely any emotion, and all the graceful melody and charming "tunes" that you can possibly remember, while "The Last Rose of Summer" itself, is the prize in the package.

The scene is laid in Merry England during the days of the good Queen Anne. The rising curtain shows the Lady Henrietta, favorite and beauty of the Queen's court, much bored and very petulant with a surfeit of luxury and pleasure. She shows no interest in even her own lovely image in the mirror which her companion, Nancy, holds enticingly. To every distraction which the solicitous maid can offer she finds some tiresome objection, even to the suggestion that "an affair" might brighten the horizon, and they sing a tuneful duet in which one advises and the other declines the diversions of love. They are interrupted by the arrival of an absurd individual, Sir Tristan Mickleford, cousin of milady, and the victim of her charms. He enters upon a pompous announcement by a lackey, and throws himself extravagantly at her feet. She impatiently bids him get up, and then she and Nancy tease him unmercifully, making him puff about the room on a series of ridiculous errands, until he is entirely out of breath and patience. This diversion beginning to pall, Henrietta shows some interest in a chorus of women's voices which floats gayly in through the casement. How tedious to think of any one as happy as that when she is so utterly bored! What can they be singing about! Nancy peers through the window and announces that they

are groups of servant girls going down to the Richmond Fair, looking for situations. Sir Tristan is annoyed at the mere mention of servants, perhaps his domestic affairs are unquiet, but Henrietta is intrigued with a novel idea born of the moment. Why not masquerade in peasants' dress and join the throng themselves! Poor Sir Tristan is horror-struck at the mere idea, but the more his impetuous cousin thinks about it the more enthusiastic she becomes, and even the sedate Nancy has a twinkle in her eye.

Lady Henrietta is a woman of action: her mind once made up, it only remains for her to get the clothes, think up some passable names, win over the testy Tristan and all is arranged! Naturally Tristan objects, he isn't really young enough to have this sort of humor and how should he, a *Peer of England* if you please, know how to behave in a company of rustics? He loves his cousin, but— . . . "Why talk so much," Henrietta wants to know, "when the thing is all decided?" All he needs is a bit of limbering up. She and Nancy will see to that at once. Taking hold of his flabby arms, they drag him about in the measures of a country-dance, until the poor soul is in danger of losing his wig and his balance. No more boredom now! To a rollicking swing of melody and laughter the curtain falls.

In Scene II we have the market-place at Richmond Fair. The scene is very gay, with a variety of booths, shops, benches, with flags, bunting and gayly dressed throngs. A number of farmers are there. The countryside would seem to be peopled by bachelors, for men have come in droves to secure hand-maidens, and very few distaffs among them. It is a delightful situation all in all, a Utopian aspect of the servant problem. If there are hosts of employers, so are there also hordes of clamoring applicants, every one of the good ladies of the chorus looking like the perfection of housemaid, with no imagination strained. Surely from their behavior, they must enjoy this more than their usual violent efforts to depict medieval nobility or night life in Paris, and it is a great occasion for certain of their number, as we shall soon see.

All is bustle and movement on the stage. The young farmers look the maids over like fillies, but as the hour for the bidding has not yet arrived, the buxom creatures decline to parley, and go off to spend their savings on refreshing small beer.

Among the farmers we soon distinguish a certain pair, one Plunkett and his adopted brother, Lionel, our tenor hero. The latter is easily remarkable for a certain "refinement of dress and manner" which according to the libretto must set him apart from the other hearties. His sensitive nature is apparent in his dis-

taste for these proceedings of vulgar barter and sale. Plunkett in his bluff way reminds his brother of their loving and late departed parent, and her dying concern for their welfare; and on a little prodding from Lionel, and for our especial enlightenment, he recalls their early history.

One day to the door of the Plunkett Farm came a weary pilgrim carrying a very small baby. The pilgrim expired upon the doorstep but not before presenting the farmer's wife with the baby plus a large gold ring which, if exhibited to the Queen in a moment of peril, would be guaranteed to work miracles. Plunkett is amazed, as are we ourselves, at the younger man's lack of enterprise in not putting the ring to the test, and in living so contentedly down on the farm.

The bold striking of the noon hour breaks in upon these fraternities, and again the stage fills with more farmers and the servant girls, their thirst quenched, their faces shining, their aprons crisp, their voices bold. The Sheriff rises importantly and reads out his notices: "All contracts made this day between masters and maids shall be binding for one year, as soon as money has changed hands." Approving this arrangement . . . who would not? . . . the crowds clamor for the thing to begin. So solemnly calling up the candidates one by one, the Sheriff asks their qualifications. These are the palpitating moments for chosen ones of the chorus, as, scarlet of face and a little windily, but with surprisingly fine voices, three separate members step up and in a hurrying, anxious, jolly little phrase, tell what they can do. Cook—sew—mend—bake—brew—wash—scrub—or mind a dozen babies; their eagerness sounds unfamiliar in this year of grace and employment bureaus. And four pounds—five pounds a year—offered and taken! If only one of those amiable ladies would leave the opera stage, she need never look for a job, our kitchen is hers for the asking!

But now the diverting scene grows confused, the bidding waxes fast and furious, masters and servants seek each other, without benefit of Sheriff, and shouting, laughing, bickering, they move off the stage, just as a queer little trio comes down from the background. Two pretty girls and a fussy old peasant, all clad in the rough clothes of their station, yet wearing them "with a difference." Delicate ankles, slender wrists, the tilt of a chin, the arch of an eyebrow betrays to us the Lady Henrietta, in spite of her short full skirts and clumsy shoes, while the dark and less aristocratic beauty of Nancy is easily discovered in her companion, and surely never was peasant quite so miserable at Rich-

mond Fair as Sir Tristan seems to be. The very air seems to contaminate his refined nostrils. "Do, pray, come away!" he implores hysterically.

Lionel and Plunkett enter again; they have been rather too fastidious in their choice of a housekeeper; none of the applicants seemed to suit. Now, however, their eyes light upon our little group, and in a moment they know that they need seek no further. After shy glances and embarrassed overtures they begin negotiations. Henrietta is entranced with the adventure, Nancy is all for it, and Tristan buzzes like an angry bee, while the two farmers offer, in their excitement, more wages than they have ever paid before, and Lionel hastens to lighten the duties because of the delicate air of the lass he likes the look of. Finally all the arrangements are made, and as "Martha" and "Betsy," the lady and her companion are engaged, and their fee accepted. But this is going a bit far for Henrietta; she looks around with a hunted air; it would probably be better not to see the thing through! After all she has her reputation at court to think of. The Plunketts are headstrong fellows, however; they don't allow any shilly-shallying; the money was paid, that settles it and off they go. Climbing into an antique wagon drawn by a listless horse, they lift the adventurous ladies in beside them, and utterly ignoring the tantrums of Sir Tristan, left behind and caught in the clamoring chorus, they jog off towards the backdrop as the curtain falls.

ACT II. The evening of the exciting day and the interior of the Plunkett Farm. Not very inviting, the feminine touch utterly lacking and the furniture of the most primitive. Somewhat travel-worn and tremulous, the two girls follow the men in. Plunkett is a practical man. They have engaged servants—good—let them serve! He is hungry—let them cook supper! The room is untidy—let them clean it up! But he might as well be talking Greek for all the results he obtains. His ornamental maids are positively shocked at the idea of work. . . . Here the story assumes a more modern aspect. . . . That they should soil their delicate hands seems a fantastic caprice on the part of their employers! Lionel, his mellow tenor heart completely won, eagerly snatches the harsh iron utensils from his Martha's hands and presents her with gentler employment at the spinning-wheel, but here she is equally vague—what can this funny-looking thing be? Plunkett is a bit exasperated; he turns the wheels and imitates its whirring to stimulate their imaginations, but it is no use; it takes

the patient explanations of both men, and many trills of girlish giggles to complete the first spinning lesson. The work they accomplish is inconsiderable, but the *quartet* they sing is one of the most delightful numbers of the score.

At last Nancy, weary of such arduous toil, upsets the wheel and runs off. Henrietta-Martha is a bit disconcerted when Plunkett runs after the temperamental maid, and she is left alone with Lionel. She starts to follow, but the gentle fellow detains her with a glance and an amorous sigh. In a moment the ice is thoroughly broken, and Lionel is rashly promising to make her his wife instead of his servant, if she will consider the proposition. If, as evidently, labor is distasteful to her, she need do nothing but sing, and incidentally he would like very much to possess a certain red rose she wears in her kerchief. Martha, her patrician propriety shocked, but her human heart not unresponsive, gives him the rose, and sings—yes, here it is, that darling of all Victorians, “The Last Rose of Summer,” in all its cloying sweetness. Lionel cannot keep out of it, it becomes a duet of such sentimental sweep that even the most hard-shelled modernist must grant it a place in the sun. Singing to him is one thing, however, and marrying him is another. His amiable offer to elevate her station seems tartly amusing to the Lady Henrietta, and she laughs with a certain chill. Lionel, however, is now head over heels in love. The rose and the song did it, and his sensitive nature is wounded to the quick, as he explains in his part of the duet which now follows—“*Ah, she laughs at my sorrows.*”

Now we quickly descend to the ridiculous, for Nancy rushes in in mischievous fury, followed heavily by the indignant but enamored Plunkett. She has upset all the milk, and smashed the bowls, but he likes her just the same. He would like to demonstrate it, but at his touch she shows cat-claws and a feline agility. Plunkett, worsted in the struggle, is nevertheless delighted with her display of strength. A buxom wench, forsooth! But time has passed, and suddenly midnight strikes and the farmers, unaccustomed to such late dissipation, lose no time in going off to bed, heaping final reproaches on the fair heads of their extraordinary maids, as they light their candles and leave.

As soon as they are alone, the girls fly tremulously into each other's arms, none too easy in their minds by this time as to just what the outcome of this madcap escapade is to be. While they are breathlessly turning over plans for escape, there is a *crunch* of wheels outside the window, and who should be revealed but old Cousin Tristan, who for once has shown a ray of intelligence and

followed them here with a chaise. He is too furious to notice the warmth of his welcome, while with many excited exclamations and whispered cautions, the two ladies exeunt informally through the window and the curtain descends.

ACT III. The ladies are now safely back in court, we presume, and the two bachelors once more minus domestics. Plunkett, however, is not taking it too hard, for here he sits at a little table outside an inn in the midst of a perfectly delightful green forest, drinking beer and singing lustily. The chorus shares his enthusiasm, and presently, announced by a flourish of horns, in comes a most diverting female hunting party, doubtless in search of like refreshment. The ladies are radiant in green velvet and ruffles, cocked hats and gauntlets, with their voluminous draperies, then the mode for the equestrienne, smartly looped and draped. Evidently leaving their mounts in the wings, they come trooping on singing of their Diana-like attributes with naïve enthusiasm. Nancy is among them and in a moment she and the dumfounded Plunkett have recognized each other with resulting confusion and indignation. Nancy, not wishing to have her shocking behavior betrayed by this worthy rustic, takes a very mean advantage of the poor creature. She points him out to her friends as something of a lunatic who is disturbing her and they pursue him about with their whips, singing and laughing in the most bewildering manner until he flees the scene, with the whole party at his heels.

Now on to the empty stage comes brother Lionel, looking quite ill and distracted. He is murmuring incoherently about a red rose and a missing lady. His aria which begins "*M'appari*" ("Like a dream") is the second most famous number in the opera and regrettably singable, as you will find when later you seek to forget it. In the midst of his ravings our old friend Sir Tristan appears and with him the recalcitrant Martha-Henrietta, who is gowned like the other ladies, only a trifle more elegantly with a yet longer train, and yet more plumes upon her hat. Tristan wishes to know why she is so pensive and melancholy and fondly believes that he may perhaps have interested her at last, but his hopes are dashed when she admits that she does not even notice he is around, and that she herself can not explain her own sadness. Thinking she may like to brood on this, Sir Tristan tactfully withdraws, and straightway she begins. Her sighs and lamentations reach most interested ears, for Lionel, you remember, is lurking in the offing. Recognizing the voice about which he has been dreaming ever since he heard it last, he starts forward

with a cry both surprised and pleased. Henrietta, however, her aristocratic spine stiffening, cannot, in spite of heart throbs, brook such impertinent familiarity from a mere peasant, and proceeds to put him neatly in his place. When he impetuously insists that his heart as well as his eye recognizes her, she looks down her nose at him and tells him he is dreaming. "Then let me dream on, do not waken me!" he replies fatuously and tries to kiss her hand. The dream ends abruptly, for Henrietta calls for help.

Sir Tristan who seems a pretty good fellow after all, and always on hand when needed, comes in followed by the huntresses, and things grow a trifle strained for Lionel who still stubbornly insists that he has a right to demand his "servant" back again. He is singularly unobservant, for apparently it never occurs to him that domestics do not usually go about in velvet and lace, with horses and retinue. He regards the whole affair as purposely arranged for his especial discomfort. So melodiously does he sing of the injustice done him that before they know it the chorus are siding with him, and reproaching Lady Henrietta for her callous behavior. Suddenly bugles are heard and more velvet ladies run in excitedly. The Queen is joining the hunt, they must all hurry to their mounts; a chorus of men confirm this advice. Lionel all at once has a thought which he conveys to the loyal Plunkett, "Would not this be an auspicious moment to test the power of that old ring my father left me?" Plunkett nods excitedly, and they rush off as the curtain falls.

ACT IV. Back once more at the Plunkett farm house, with that honest soul singing in troubled fashion about Lionel's mental condition, a quite lovely aria, "*My Lionel will perish.*" It is the truth. So low in his mind is the young man that he is wasting away. This will tax your imagination when you see him, for tenors are traditionally plump, but the perfect opera-goer is never disconcerted. Besides, help is at hand, for here come Henrietta and Nancy, full of news, and contritely eager to repair the damage they have caused. The first step is to remove the unnecessary witnesses, so the maid and the farmer, nothing loath, go off together. Now Lionel wanders in, still mooning about love and his lady. He has a shock when he sees her, but now he is the stony one, she has tampered with his affections once too often; now nothing she can say or do will make any difference. For emphasis, he throws down the faded last rose of summer at her feet, with several extremely rude remarks. Henrietta has a piece of news for him, which may change his attitude. In some mysterious

manner she herself managed to present the ring to the Queen, with the amazing result that the good Anne recognized it as belonging to the late Earl of Derby who was unjustly exiled from the country because of complicity in a Jacobean plot. The lands and title and coronet having gone unclaimed for some time, Her Gracious Majesty is now delighted to make reparation by instating Lionel upon his ancestral hearth.

So this accounts, you see, for that genteel behavior which has been so conspicuous in Lionel from the start. He is now extremely bewildered by such a turn of affairs, especially as Henrietta, feeling that she is no longer in danger of injuring her social position, now boldly offers him her hand and heart. But the proud man actually turns her down and will none of her, which after all serves her perfectly right. Her tears and penitence make no impression upon him, and fiercely breathing through his nose he leaves the stage. Now Plunkett and Nancy, having reached some very amicable arrangement between them, hurry in and the distressed lady appeals to them for help, but they are evidently of the opinion that she has made her bed and may lie in it. They are far more interested in their own affairs, and when she has left the stage, proceed coyly to cement their affections with an "understanding." The wedding day is to wait, out of concession to friendship, only long enough to see Lionel and Henrietta safely out of their difficulties.

The last scene is brief. Apparently a reconciliation between our lovers can only be brought about by the most elaborate methods, and money has been no object, for here in Lady Henrietta's park we see the Richmond Fair faithfully reproduced, with the invaluable assistance of the opera property man. Lady Henrietta and Nancy are there, dressed once more as Martha and Betsy, and fluttering anxiously about for fear some detail has been overlooked. The chorus of maids is there, singing exactly as they did before, the clock strikes on schedule, and Plunkett appears dragging the reluctant Lionel, who seems a bit confused. However, when he sees Martha, looking just as she did that unfortunate evening in his kitchen, his stony heart melts and he seems to be floating in delicious delirium. While Plunkett and his saucy fiancée flirt playfully, to the vast entertainment of the chorus, Henrietta is suddenly inspired to begin her song of the "Last Rose," which had once before proved Lionel's undoing. It is equally successful now, and, shaking off the pink mists before his eyes, he rises manfully to the occasion and takes his far-from-reluctant lady to his breast.

DIE MEISTERSINGER

By RICHARD WAGNER

First Produced in Munich, 1868

THE idea of Richard Wagner writing a comedy will seem utterly incongruous to many minds, and yet in *The Master Singers of Nuremberg*, the same genius which created the immortal *Tristan and Isolde* has, directed into a contrasted channel, flowered with the same amazing abundance of inspiration. Some enthusiasts go so far as to state that this comedy is intrinsically the greatest of all his efforts, and so it may be; it is a point open for discussion. Highly amusing and delightful every moment of its long unfolding, it cannot, however, by its very nature accomplish such spiritual uplift as do the grander themes worked out by the master. Life is not all serious moments, however. This seems to be the idea back of his conception of the *Meistersinger*, as he satirizes the pomposity and grave dignity of the Guilds and delights in the pranks of the apprentices and the impetuosity of young love, and the confounding of conservatism. Learned commentators have read into the plot an interesting symbolism. Walther, the young singer, with genius unfettered by the conventions and traditions of the past, may be taken for Wagner himself, and the wholesome conclusion that no original creation is of value in the world of Art unless evolved after a profound digestion of all the rules and principles which have guided or even misguided one's predecessors, might be applied with benefit in this day of the ruthless young intellectuals.

The orchestral Prelude is long, but of a bewildering brilliance. Without naming the various motifs of which the composition is woven, and with which it is embellished, we can easily feel the atmosphere of the old town of Nuremberg in the height of its prosperity, at the end of the sixteenth century, and the quaint activities of its estimable citizens and its powerful and picturesque Guilds; while embroidered within its fabric we recognize a mischievous phrase or two that might mean the larks of the apprentices, with here and there a note of derision, poking fun at some

absurd personality, or a lovely fragrant snatch of melody which surely must depict some phase of youthful love. Listen to the music thus with mind open to impressions, and you will fulfill the whole of Wagner's intention. He gave no arbitrary names to his leading motifs. He maintained that an opera is merely a music-drama, and that if rightly composed the music will interpret and simultaneously produce in the listener the identical mood induced by the words and action upon the stage. No guide other than intelligence did he ever desire brought to a hearing of his works.

ACT I takes place in St. Catharine's church in Nuremberg, which you may in reality see to-day when you visit that old town, for it was the actual scene of the Meistersinger meetings. The action takes place in the nave and a few of the rear pews are visible, crowded with townspeople singing the last chant of a service in honor of the eve of St. John's Day. The lovely Eva Pogner, daughter of the goldsmith, with her nurse, Magdalena, are plainly visible not only to us but to the young and handsome Walther von Stolzing, a nobleman of Thuringia, lately come to Nuremberg. He has been to old Pogner's shop, but this is his first glimpse of the daughter, and it is love at first sight. He stands by a pillar gazing at her in rapture, and she is not unconscious of his burning looks. When the service is over and the congregation disperses, she sends her maid back to the pews first on one errand and then another, to yield opportunity to Walther to address her. He does so with such ardor that after a conventional remark or two he boldly declares his love and his desire to wed her. Magdalena, joining them, is shocked at such conversation in the sacred edifice, but now discovering that she has forgotten her own prayer-book, leaves them again and once more the lovers (for Eva has responded with equal warmth) talk earnestly of ways and means. But Magdalena, returning again, discourages Walther by the information that Eva's hand is to be the prize in the tournament of song at to-morrow's fête. Eva teases Magdalena to help them, and finally the amiable woman suggests that David, her extremely young sweetheart, who is an apprentice to the Master Hans Sachs, might coach Walther so that he could successfully compete.

The young person in question has now entered the church to arrange for the rehearsal soon to be held, and although busy with rule and chalk and instructions to his helpers, interspersed with affectionate demonstrations for his old-maid sweetheart, he blithely accepts Walther as a pupil and reels off an absurd recital of the

the rules and "modes" to be followed in song composition. He alludes with wry face to the "strap" mode, which his master also includes in his instructions—a theme we shall hear again. The other apprentices laugh and sing as they place the benches and the platform for the "Marker," tease David about his "kick and smack" tunes, and his "hunger" mode that he must also know well. Walther is informed that in the curtained box which they have just arranged, a member will keep score on a slate and if a contestant has more than seven errors in his composition he is rejected. They rather like the young knight, and still dancing and singing, hope he may win the wreath of silken flowers.

But their horseplay and noise is suddenly quiet—each stands respectfully behind a stool as the first of the Meisters arrive. These are Pogner, Eva's father, and Beckmesser, the town clerk and the clown of the opera, who is also a suitor for Eva's hand. They are talking of this very thing, and Beckmesser glares with unfriendly eye when the young and presentable Walther is introduced and expresses his desire to enter the Guild. All the while, to a theme pompous almost to absurdity, the other ten of the Meisters have entered, representatives of all the established trades of the town, and historic characters, every one, with names from the archives. The roll is called and before the routine business commences Pogner rises to address them. For the glory of the town and out of the great reverence in which he holds their art, he will offer his daughter's hand as the prize at to-morrow's Festival Song Trial. He is determined to have a Meistersinger for a son-in-law, but he retains for his daughter the right to reject an unwelcome candidate.

This meets with approval and some discussion, and it evolves that Sachs loves Eva, although he humorously advises Beckmesser that they are both too old to enter the lists, to the latter's dismay and resentment, which increases as Pogner presents the new aspirant, Walther, to the Assembly. The members are interested and not uncordial. They wish to know more of him, and with whom he has studied. Walther, with great earnestness, explains in one of the most graceful numbers in the opera that poetry he has studied from the pen of old Walther von der Vogelweide (we met him in Tannhäuser, you remember). This is conventional; the Assembly nods approval. But music he has studied from nature and from the song of the birds, the ripple of the brooks, the sighing of the forests. This does not meet with quite as much commendation, although Herr Vogelgesang admires the form of his stanzas. Beckmesser, with caustic wit that plays on the Meis-

ter's name, says that of course "Mr. Birdsong" would admire a pupil of the linnets and thrushes. However, the sense of the meeting is that it will give Walther a trial, and Beckmesser, the senior member, is appointed as marker, and goes into the curtained box, while Herr Kothner reads aloud the ponderous rules, any infraction of which will merit a black mark.

Walther, rather nervous, sits in the singer's chair, and when Beckmesser thrusts out his head and snaps "Begin!" he improvises his *Hymn to Spring*, a lovely melody of which we have been hearing orchestral hints now and then, especially in the Prelude. From behind the curtains comes the sound of vicious scratching. Presently Beckmesser interrupts and asks if the song is finished, because his slate is full. He exhibits maliciously an alarming number of bad marks. The Masters themselves meanwhile have not accorded the song much enthusiasm; beautiful it may be, but for its shocking infringement of all the established rules (observe Wagner's irony), it must be pronounced a failure. More or less confusion ensues in which Walther rather loses his temper and Pogner with difficulty restores order. Even the pleas of the good-natured and kindly Sachs that the singer be allowed to finish, go unheeded, and to the satisfaction of Beckmesser, who is furious at this intercession, Walther is sentenced, "Rejected and outsung"—and the meeting adjourns. The frolicsome apprentices remove the box and stools and gibe at their late favorite for his failure. Sachs is the last to leave. He gazes wistfully for a moment at the singer's empty chair, shrugs his shoulders a bit sadly, and starts to go as the curtain falls. The orchestra continues to play a few phrases which we might almost suspect of ridiculing the dignity of the worthy Meisters.

ACT II is kaleidoscopic in its wealth of incident and colorful detail, but not hard to follow if one listens to the descriptive annotations of the friendly orchestra. After a brief prelude the curtain rises upon a picturesque corner of Nuremberg, showing the house of Pogner across an intersecting street from the famous shop and dwelling of Hans Sachs, the Cobbler Poet. Gay, skipping measures indicate the skylarking apprentices, who, our friend David among them, are busy putting up the shutters on various houses. They are agog with excitement over the contest of the morrow and gayly sing in praise of St. John, "*Johannes Tag! Johannes Tag!*" David is a bit sulky over the teasing he is getting from his friends, and fails to see his ancient sweetheart with a basket of sweetmeats, when she beckons him, to the amusement of

the other boys. This was to have been his reward if his pupil Walther had been accepted, however, and David tells her sadly of his failure. She returns in dismay to Pogner's house while the boys renew their mockery of poor David and his affairs. Their capers come to an end with the entrance of Sachs, who reprimands his apprentice and sends him indoors to finish some work, to amusing accompaniment of orchestral repetition of David's song in ACT I about the "strap" rule and the "leather" mode.

Both enter the shop, and now Pogner and his daughter, having been out for an evening stroll, come sauntering home, consider stopping at Sachs', peer through the shutters, then change their minds and go and sit beneath their own linden tree, while the clarinet speaks in the orchestra a word or two about linden blossoms and love. Eva is not especially communicative when her father sounds her about to-morrow's event; the fact is she is expecting Walther and would like to get rid of her father. Her chief interest is the unalterable fact that her accepted suitor must be a Meistersinger. She asks again to make sure, and as her father insists and the orchestra alludes to the glory and dignity of Nuremberg, Magdalena appears at the door and calls them in to supper. As they pass through the door the nurse whispers that the news is bad—Eva shall ask Sachs for details after supper—and there is a message, too. "From Walther?" (eagerly). "No—from Beckmesser!" With a shrug Eva goes within.

As the evening is still and balmy, Sachs now has his bench brought outside, so that he may work there, and bids David be off to his bed. David is perplexed. Why should any one work at night, and why is Magdalena behaving so badly? Scratching and puzzling his young pate he calls "good night," leaving Sachs to his thoughts. The gentle old man takes a long breath of the fragrance of the elder bush beneath which he sits (you will never again see the elder flower in bloom without thinking of *Meistersinger* and *Johannes Tag*). There is no use trying to work—he makes a futile effort but the scent of the flowers is too strong of summertime, and his thoughts go wandering down pleasant lanes. The young knight and his song, lovely in spite of its innovations—the boy's teachers—nature and the birds, and finally the young love alight in Eva's heart—all of it is part of gentle summer, he muses dreamily.

He is interrupted by Eva herself, who runs across the cobblestones and sits at his side. No—it is not anything so dull as her new shoes which she wishes to discuss. Slyly she leads the conversation around to the great event of to-morrow. She learns

that the ugly shoes in process beneath the cobbler's hands are for Beckmesser, and makes a wry face—she would prefer a widower to an elderly bachelor. With coquetry she looks at Sachs, but he loves her too dearly to lead her on—he is too old, he says jokingly. She denies that age matters in love, and then inquires casually about the trial of the afternoon. Sachs, observing her eagerness, permits himself a little jealous indulgence. He emphasizes the young knight's failure, and smiles to himself when she runs off petulantly, declaring the Meistersingers a stupid lot of old fogies.

Now she and Magdalena are cooking up some mischief. Beckmesser is coming to serenade Eva, so she and the nurse will change clothes, to the confounding of the old idiot, and with the secondary hope of making David jealous. Pogner calls them in as it is getting late, but Eva, seeing Walther approaching, snatches a moment to assure him of her love and her willingness to go away with him if need be. But a raucous horn now tells her that the watchman approaches, so she hides her lover behind the linden tree and runs into the house. The old watchman is an amusing figure, and his chant is a straight parody of the medieval curfew song. He peers rather helplessly about, with his feeble lantern, then finally patters away down the street, sounding his absurd horn as he goes. Sachs, peering from his window, is a bit worried when he sees Eva, dressed as Magdalena, join Walther beneath the linden. He is rather suspicious of an elopement, so mischievously opens his shutter and lets a broad streak of light fall across their path. They retreat into the shadows.

Now to a derisive, plucking measure, Beckmesser, absurdly impersonating a troubadour, arrives, and tunes his clumsy lute beneath Eva's window. His song is farcical, he has difficulty in getting under way, especially the tapping of Sachs' hammer across the street annoys him, and the song which the cobbler is humming about a little pair of angel's shoes for Eva. Beckmesser interrupts his efforts to challenge Sachs and comment upon his prolonged industry, and learns that his own shoes are in process of repair. Beckmesser's song in the meantime has disturbed Walther, the young hot-blood, who draws his sword, but as he sees Magdalena at Eva's window he understands the joke and is much entertained. Now Beckmesser has a brilliant idea. Sachs shall be "marker" for him, and only tap out his mistakes, so the ridiculous song begins again and Sachs taps furiously. In a moment the cobbler interrupts, parodying Beckmesser and the slate at the afternoon's trial, and says the song must soon end for the shoes are done. The troubadour, however, has no sense of humor; he objects

loudly and heads begin to appear in the neighboring windows to know what all the noise is about. Magdalena is furious, and David, roused from his slumbers and observing some one serenading his special property, rushes out and begins to belabor the poor clerk with a club. Quite a riot ensues as various neighbors run into the street to stop the fight, and the swarming apprentices appear to increase the confusion as much as possible. All the houses must be densely populated, for now in every window little and big, appears a night-capped head and a lighted taper, with most amusing effect. All the time David goes on punishing poor Beckmesser and the orchestra strikes with him, having a glorious and highly diverting time. Pogner comes out, and getting all mixed up between the disguised Magdalena and his daughter, storms to no effect. Dignified old Sachs finally kicks David back into his shop and drags Walther after him, while Beckmesser, struggling to his shaking feet, limps off with more haste than dignity, followed by the shrieking boys. In the distance the watchman's horn is heard and the shocked townsfolk go back to bed. When the futile old man with the lantern appears to quell the riot not a soul is in sight. He looks about, perplexed, blows his horn tentatively, lunges nervously at a shadow, and wanders off again, leaving the empty little square as peaceful and quiet as if nothing had happened, while the moonlight gliding down the orchestra floods everything with silvery beauty.

ACT III is inside of the Cobbler's shop on the morning of the great Day. We have been prepared by a little orchestral comment for Sachs' mood and find him sitting reading a heavy book open on his knees. He is too absorbed to notice the ebullient David, who darts in with a basketful of cakes and gewgaws. Of the boy's chatter about his errand, and his pangs over Magdalena, and his penitence over last night's behavior, Sachs apparently hears nothing, but glancing up at last, sees David's basket and ribbons and wonders if he is going to be married. David is convulsed at the idea, but reminds his good master that it is St. John's Day and a most festive morning. "Ah, yes," exclaims his master, "let me hear your verses." The irrepressible David begins the legend of St. John to the tune of Beckmesser's serenade, but rebuked by Sachs, changes to a folk-melody and continues to the end. Then he has an inspiration! Johannes—Hans—the same name! It is his master's fête day! Impulsively he offers his little basket as tribute. Sachs, touched, refuses, but bids the boy go and dress, for he shall act as his herald in the procession. David, quite

outdoing himself, kisses the old man's hand and says he would rather stand at his wedding—may Sach win the prize and marry the bride! He dances out and Sachs, shaking his head sadly, begins his famous *Monologue*. Surely all of the world has gone quite mad, he sighs, reviewing the fantastic events of last night. Some sort of fairy folk about, and yet probably nothing but the spell of the Elder Tree's fragrance after all. Midsummer night! Ah, what magic!

His musings are interrupted by the entrance of Walther, looking very spruce and shining. Sachs lets his book fall and greets the young man who was his guest for the night, inquiring if he slept. Not only did he sleep, but he had a wonderful dream. His eyes shine as he recalls it, and Sachs insists that he tell it in poetic verse, it is the rightful clothing of dreams, and besides it will be excellent practice, so Walther, sustained by the harp, now for the first time singing a little of the famous *Prize Song*, sketches his vision, while Sachs corrects and instructs him in the form of the song, writing down the measures. In his sleep he wandered into a garden at dawn, and a lovely maiden taking his hand led him to the Tree of Life, which, in the second verse, blossomed at evening with golden stars. Sachs is perfectly delighted, the song is beautiful and good; it lacks only a conclusion which Walther, now acquainted with the rules, can add later, for at present it is time to dress.

Now to the limping, hobbling notes which suggest him, Beckmesser comes for his shoes. His sufferings are comically acute; he can neither stand nor sit in comfort, and the orchestra sympathizes and laughs together at his agonies. Seeing a manuscript lying on the table he promptly pockets it—he is feeling far from well and not up to an original composition. Sachs now enters, trying to hide a smile at Beckmesser's condition. For a while they discuss the shoes and then Sachs, missing the manuscript from the table, accuses his visitor, who confesses. Unexpectedly Sachs bestows the song on him—he will not compete to-day. The old clerk is overjoyed, for Sachs' reputation as a poet is great; if he sings this he is bound to win. Scarcely believing his luck he asks for repeated assurances from the cobbler that he will not claim it. Half incredulous, but wholly contented, he hobbles painfully away. Immediately Sachs has another visitor. Eva comes shyly in, very radiant and lovely in her wedding-dress. She makes some pretty excuse about her new shoes pinching a bit, but Sachs knows she wants to see Walther, and have him see her. So he kneels at her little feet and delays long at his task. Finally the young

knight appears, dressed as the lilies of the field. Eva is overwhelmed and they greet each other rapturously, while Sachs patiently "sticks to his last." Walther must sing for them his last verse, for it is almost time to go, so he raises his pleasing tenor, and Sachs informs Eva that this is indeed a master song, and will be sure to win. The lovely girl kisses her old friend in loving understanding of his own sacrifice in not competing and even sheds a few tears for remembrance. But Sachs, trying to hide his emotion behind practical subjects, tells them to run along—he is busy and worried over David's scandalous pranks. Eva sees through him, kisses him again, half wishes he were to be the winner. No, smiles Sachs—he has read the tale of Tristan and Isolde—he wouldn't care for the rôle of King Mark! And here the orchestra dimly remembers and suggests two familiar themes from the second act of *Tristan und Isolde*.

Magdalena bustles in after her mistress, and David, hearing her voice, appears, while Sachs, shaking off his depression, calls them as witnesses to the christening of a new song-mode, invented by Walther—*The Happy Dream*—and in order that David shall be worthy the honor, promotes him to the rank of Journeyman. Eva begins to sing with joy and soon the others join her, each speaking of his own special interests, but uniting their voices into a *quintet* which is one of the high-lights in the score. This finishes the scene, the curtain descending on their immediate preparations for departure.

The orchestra plays continuously during the change upon the stage and leads us in much pomp and circumstance to the scene of the festival, a meadow on the outskirts of the town, by a winding stream. All the good burghers with their wives and children have turned out in full force and are still arriving by boat and on foot as the curtain rises. The great procession is approaching, with first the apprentices, decked out in much finery, to act as ushers. Now we have the sonorous *March of the Guilds*, and each little group approaches with excessive pride and dignity, flying their particular banner and importantly taking their places on the grandstand. Following the Shoemakers come the Toy Makers, to a most diverting variant of the march played upon specially converted instruments in the orchestra; then the Tailors, chanting a legend of one of their number who dressed in goat-skin and frightened away a besieging army—the bleating of the goat can plainly be heard. After them come the Bakers, and now, of much interest to the Apprentices, a boatload of girls from Firth. The rollicking boys seize them instantly and begin a gay

dance, interrupted by the more mature Journeymen, who try to snatch their partners. Even David braves the possible observation of Lena to kiss a new face, but all revels suddenly cease on the arrival of the band of Meistersingers, to a magnificent exploitation of their own especial theme. All take their seats on the dais with extreme dignity, while Eva, escorted by Magdalena and a train of maidens, takes a place of honor.

Sachs, as head of the Guild, rises to address the throng, who most tactfully burst into song. It is a pretty compliment they pay as they chant one of his own compositions (which, by the way, is taken *verbatim* from the Reformation Song of the real Hans Sachs). After the "Hails!" of the people he makes a little speech of thanks and presents Eva to them as the prize in the coming contest, and shakes hands with the generous Father Pogner, who cannot restrain his emotion. The boys, meanwhile, have been busy erecting a little platform of turf for the singer, and Beckmesser, as the senior contestant, is the first to climb upon it. Naturally he finds the process awkward, and every one laughs—no one takes his efforts seriously. Although he has Walther's song he cannot sing it. The soreness of his bones seem to have spread to his voice. He chokes and croaks like a raven and the people, urged on by the orchestra, deride him with amused chuckles. He has stage fright, forgets his lines, extemporizes wildly, makes an absurd botch of the whole thing, and finally, after blaming Sachs for his troubles, takes to ignominious flight.

Sachs rises and explains the situation to the crowds. The song is really beautiful. Perhaps there is some one who *can* sing it. So of course Walther steps forward, and of course, having waited through three acts for just this occasion, quite spreads himself in his completed and ravishing aria, the beloved *Prize Song*. When he is done, all is soon over. No doubt at all is left in any one's mind that he is the Victor: such music, such poetry, such vision it has never before been their lot to greet! The wreath is placed on his brow by Eva, who blushes and smiles and weeps and gives him her hand in betrothal. The embarrassed young man wishes modestly to decline the honor of admission to the Meistersingers' Guild, but advised by Sachs that it would be a grievous *faux pas*, finally accepts, while Eva, obeying a pretty impulse, snatches the wreath from her lover's brow and places it upon the gray head of Hans Sachs, to delirious exclamations of approval and homage from the crowd, as the curtain falls.

MIGNON

By AMBROISE THOMAS

First Sung at the Opéra Comique, Paris, 1866

THIS opera is infrequently sung, and just why, it would be difficult to say, for it is a story of appealing loveliness, it contains some of the most haunting music ever written, and the title rôle is an endearing one. Whenever it is revived, people crowd to hear it. Perhaps it will come back into its own again some day when the pendulum of public taste swings back toward unsophistication.

ACT I takes place in the courtyard of a little country inn in Germany. Townspeople are singing and drinking after the time-honored custom of operatic choruses as the curtain rises, but soon our attention is directed to a pathetic and broken old man with a harp, whom some of them recognize as Lotario, the wandering minstrel. Half demented, he is searching the world over for his little girl, stolen from him years ago by a band of gypsies. As the hospitable drinkers beg him to join them, a commotion is heard at the gate in the rear, and a procession of itinerant Zighani come in, followed by a cart containing their domestic goods, and in which reposes a young girl, sound asleep under an old carpet. The townsfolk, always ready to be amused, welcome this diversion, while Filina and Laertes, actors on their way to perform at the neighboring castle, come out on their balcony to enjoy the fun. The leader of the gypsies, Giarno, who is a man of small personal charm, rouses the girl, Mignon, from her unsavory bed, and tweaking her ear, orders her to wake up and perform the famous "Egg Dance" for these gentry. Mignon fears this dance, for when one is tired and hungry and forlorn it is no easy matter to step about among a lot of eggs without breaking them. A whipping is always her reward, and this time she rebels. At such an amazing display of stubbornness, Giarno thinks she might as well have the whipping anyway, and begins to flourish his rawhide, just as old Lotario, thrusting his ancient bones between

the two, tries to help her escape. But Giarno's strength is too much for him, he is pushed aside and once more the whip sings about Mignon's ears with the command to dance.

At this moment a dapper young man, evidently just arrived with much luggage, steps up and interferes with Giarno's cruelty. This is Guglielmo, or William, a rich youth out to see the world—big-hearted, impressionable and a tenor. His pistol brings Giarno to terms at once, and a purse lightly tossed from Filina's balcony in some measure compensates him for the money the dance would have brought in.

The townspeople now crowd out, as there is nothing left to see, and Mignon joins the other gypsies, while the vivacious Filina shows a flash of interest in the handsome young stranger. When she goes back into her room, her companion, Laertes, comes downstairs to make the acquaintance of the newcomer, who explains himself eagerly. He is just a year out of college, with plenty of money and in search of adventure; and he is not insensible to the beauty of a lady he saw on the balcony.

"Who, Filina?" says Laertes. "I know her too well to be very enthusiastic. She is fickle and vain. But we might as well drink her health."

Filina has come out in time to hear these doubtful compliments. She joins the young men and teases Laertes with playful banter, the while she directs her flashing eye to no good purpose upon the infatuated student. Laertes, who seems to be somewhat of an intriguer, urges them on, and snatching a little nosegay of wild-flowers which Mignon in her gratitude has divided between her two rescuers, gives them to the actress with a magnificent flourish. After a little more banter, Filina takes Laertes' arm and goes in, while Mignon, crawling out from under the wagon, steals over toward William, wishing to kiss the hand of her brave defender. William is touched, and sitting down, tries to make the pitiful child tell him something of her life. She knows little, only that she has no mother and has been sold from "devil" to "devil," and has only vague memories of something beautiful a long time ago. William of the big heart thinks he has never heard anything so sad. He wants to know, if by any chance she should be set free, where she would go; and the girl, staring dreamily ahead of her, asks him pitifully if he does not know a beautiful land where it is always springtime, a place where the birds never cease singing or the bees buzzing among the orange blossoms, a lovely land in which one might be contented to live and also to die. This is the famous "*Connais-tu le pays,*" which is perhaps, take it all in all,

the sweetest song ever written for a woman's voice, and which, like all good things, is in danger of being done to death by popularity.

The traveled William instantly recognizes the description of Italy and resolves that he will purchase the child and set her free. A creature of impulse, he immediately calls in Giarno, who strikes a good bargain and goes off perfectly satisfied to close the deal with a glass of wine. Mignon, left alone, is intoxicated with the sudden joy of her deliverance, and performs a prettier dance of happiness than anything which could have been inspired by the whip of Giarno. In the midst of her ecstasy Lotario, her first friend, appears again, fingering his harp and talking vaguely of good-by. But Mignon, flying to him, makes him share with her in her new happiness. The old man's eye kindles, she makes him think of a pretty little swallow. Together they sing an entrancing duet about these free and lovely birds, and withdraw to the shadow of the pent-house, as Filina appears, laughing loudly and chiding a young popinjay of a fellow who has just arrived, and is fastidiously brushing the dust of his journey from his flashy attire. This is Frederick, the stage-struck and infatuated moon-calf who follows Filina wherever she goes. He is an effeminate creature with a contralto voice, but of little real use in the story (which seems to be the opinion of every one, especially Filina).

As Giarno and William come from the inn, Laertes rushes in, very excited over a letter which he thrusts into Filina's hand. The lord of the castle, wishing to celebrate the arrival of a distinguished guest that very night, requests the actress and her company to come to the castle, and goes so far as to add that if she refuses he will have her brought by force. There being, apparently, no two sides to the matter, Filina accepts, and invites the student to form part of her train in any capacity he can devise. Frederick is insane with jealousy and follows her in puny rage, but Laertes lingers to warn William to watch his step.

When they have gone, Mignon steals back. Lotario wishes her to join him in his wanderings, but her grateful heart is full of an emotion which is very like love for her younger friend, and she prefers to stay with him if possible. At first he demurs, but when she pleads so desperately he is, like all men, very flattered, and consents that she dress like a boy—a concession to the conventions—and go with him as his page. Mignon impulsively kisses his hand. Nothing could be more wonderful. Only poor old Lotario is sad: he must go on, as usual, all alone.

Now the courtyard fills again with a great hubbub, as the actors assemble their baggage and start for the castle. Mignon goes off to get her poor little bundle of possessions, but turning around suddenly, sees the brilliant Filina wearing the little nosegay she gave to William, and overhears an agreement they are making to meet again. Somewhat dashed by the first pangs of jealousy, she nevertheless goes about bidding good-by to such friends as she has among the gypsies, and distributing little gifts, then stands ready to follow her new master, her eyes fixed adoringly upon him, as the curtain falls.

ACT II introduces us into the intimacies of the boudoir provided by a lavish host for Filina's use at the castle. She is there at her dressing-table, which is heaped with letters and flowers in the approved style for all popular actresses the world over. Filina is more than pleased with her own reflection, and the reception she has been accorded, and in high good humor teases Laertes, who has been singing gayly in the wings and now comes on to chat with her. Actually for a few moments they seem to be free of Frederick the pest, and they begin to wonder if William is going to fail them too. Filina feels confident that her magnetism was sufficiently strong to attract him here, and as she speaks the words the young man enters. Mignon is at his heels, dressed as his page, very boyish and appealing and shy. Laertes, tactful fellow, leaves to attend to certain details of the evening's performance of "Midsummer Night's Dream."

Filina notices Mignon, standing humbly by the door, and is instantly alert with jealousy. The child looks altogether too charming in her breeches and short dark curls, and her position with William is too advantageous; so she seeks, with patent lack of breeding, to make the girl sensible of her station with a coarse allusion to her past. But William, perfectly innocent of any trouble, brings in his shivering page and places her in a chair by the fire, for which she is pitifully grateful, in spite of the biting sarcasm in which the actress now indulges. How touching to see the master wait upon the page, perhaps he will wait upon *her* too, for instance bring extra candles to her mirror. The amiable William hastens to do her bidding and gazes infatuated as she proceeds to correct an eyebrow, sketch in a pout and rearrange her coiffure. His admiration, surging within him, finds natural expression in melodious song, but his music is evidently a lullaby for the little page, who, drowsy with the heat, is nodding in her chair. William grows more ardent, Filina more flirtatious, but when a

kiss is pressed upon the lady's hand, Mignon is wide awake. "I thought as much!" says Filina, and taking William's arm she sweeps from the room, to the tune of his amorous protestations.

Mignon is left alone, and more or less wretched, for she has freely given the ardent love of her starved young heart to this handsome gallant, and she begins to hate this painted hussy who has ensnared him. At any rate, it is amusing to be thus alone in the woman's room. With naïve curiosity she begins to poke about, trying this and that cosmetic and laughing at the charming result in the mirror. As she gazes she begins her *Styrienne*, a little lilting song about a gypsy "boy" she once knew, and his mad adventure. Well, if the effect of rouge and powder is so successful, why not explore further, there must be delightful secrets in the wardrobe! Still humming, she gayly enters the next room. This short scene is one of the most engaging and piquant in any opera, and given a prima donna with an appealing voice and personality and of some moderate grace and slenderness, we have something very fragrant to place among our memories.

Almost immediately we witness what seems like a burlesque of the incident, for Frederick intrudes himself slyly into the boudoir, and begins strutting like an impossible little bantam in his tight satin suit, and caroling a pert gavotte to the effect that "Here he is where he has no business to be!" Suddenly the door opens and William rushes in, calling Mignon; for the feline Filina has actually induced him to part from his page, and he has come to get the disagreeable matter over with. Frederick resents the intrusion, but William thinks that Frederick might reasonably make an explanation or two himself. After some mordant repartee, they agree to fight, and as they draw their rapiers and snap to position, there is a cry of terror, and Mignon, trailing an elaborate garment of Filina's, rushes in and darts between them. Frederick, glad enough of any pretext for sheathing his sword, laughs unpleasantly at the situation and swaggers out.

William is annoyed at Mignon—after all she is causing him a bad quarter of an hour, although it is scarcely her fault. He feels he must be gruff about something, so scolds her for dressing in other people's clothes. Incidentally he has decided no longer to employ a page of such compromising allure. Looking at the girl's pretty distressed face and childish form amid all Filina's garish finery, the edge of his severity dulls and he sings her a lovely aria of farewell. Of course Mignon begins to cry bitterly, but she is used to blows, and tries valiantly to make it easier for William.

She has only one request, that when she is free again, she may resume the old gypsy rags and once more take to the fields and hedgerows. William, quite emotional himself, offers her a full purse, but she prefers one grateful kiss upon his hand, as less practical but infinitely more precious. And now the unreasonable man, having broken her heart for his own selfish interests, begins to resent her readiness to obey him, and wishes he had not let her go—in fact considers himself very much abused.

In the midst of this touching scene, Filina comes back, and is naturally extremely vexed to see one of her best dresses trailed about so casually; but William pleads for the child, and Filina, feeling probably that the gown has been contaminated by such plebeian contact, presents it to her. Mignon isn't very grateful. She tears off the lace and ribbons and, flinging them in shreds upon the floor, dashes from the room.

"Well, upon my word—the ungrateful hussy!" exclaims the actress; but Laertes coming in breathlessly to say that her cue is approaching, she departs forthwith upon the arm of William.

When they are gone, Frederick emerges and states that he could with pleasure run the gallant William through the vitals. At the same time Mignon, having very quickly resumed her picturesque rags of the first act, enters and sobs angrily her hate for "that woman."

The scene now changes to the park outside the castle. To the left is a lake ornamented with tall cat-tails, and to the right a wing of the conservatory, which is brilliantly illuminated and from which proceeds music and the sound of enthusiastic applause. It is a big night for Filina, but poor little Mignon is out here all alone in the dark, so very miserable that she thinks the best way out of all her troubles would be that lake. She is already floundering among the reeds when the strains of a harp are heard from among the trees at the side, and she stops at the crucial moment. This sad sound has made her ashamed of her rash impulse and she rushes sobbing to her first friend, old Lotario, who is wandering vaguely about the grounds. He comforts her very gently, half pretending that she is his long lost child, and telling her that he himself has had a good deal of experience in heartbreaks. The sound of applause from the castle grows more and more vociferous, Mignon finding it very hard to bear—for in her imagination she can picture the admiring and rapt face of her lover turned adoringly upon the shallow Filina. She wishes some kind of divine fire would descend and burn up the whole lot of them; she cries

bitterly and runs off where she will be out of ear-shot. "Fire? Did she say something about fire?" murmurs Lotario confusedly, then with a sudden determination, goes quickly out.

Now the play is over and the audience comes out on the terrace to enjoy the air and sing the praises of the leading lady. She has not bothered to remove her costume which she knows is becoming, and leading her train of admirers, bursts into a jubilant and excited *Polonaise*, the famous "*I'm fair Titania*," a coloratura *pièce de résistance* of the greatest popularity. At the very end of her song William appears, to her delight, but to the great displeasure of Frederick, by this time quite mad with jealousy. But he need not worry, for William is not thinking of fair Titania just now, but of a ragged gypsy girl he did not know enough to appreciate until she left him. As they move toward the rear, the object of his search creeps by and meets Lotario, who somewhat wild-eyed comes staggering from the wings. "Don't worry any more, my dear," he says excitedly; "you have your wish, I've set the place on fire."

"Good heavens!" cries Mignon, not knowing just what to do, but the sudden sight of her beloved William puts every other thought from her mind, and she answers his anxious call with her customary, "How can I serve?" But Filina is none too pleased to have this tiresome girl on the scene again. "If you're so anxious to please, run into the conservatory and find the little nosegay you gave your master yesterday and which has just fallen from my bosom." It is a neat and poisoned thrust, but Mignon, sentimentally anxious to recover her flowers, goes to obey. Now suddenly every one discovers that the castle is on fire, and the greatest excitement naturally ensues. No one thinks of Mignon until William suddenly remembers she went in. Quite heedless of choral advice and the off-stage crashing of conservatory glass, he dashes bravely into the red glow, and after an interval of suspense, emerges with the slender, unconscious form of his little *protégée*. In her limp hand are the withered field flowers she went to find. Lotario, having accomplished his fanatical mission, goes off, serenely playing his harp and singing, while all the guests and retainers gather around the hero with exclamations of awe and admiration as the curtain falls.

ACT III. Mignon's conquest of William's affection is now complete. There is nothing in the world too good for her. The adventure of the burning conservatory has had a bad effect on the girl's health, and the fond William, in desperation, has rented an

Italian villa and brought her here with the faithful Lotario, in the hope that she will recover rapidly under sunny skies. But she is still very ill indeed. Soon after the curtain rises, Lotario comes sadly into the great room. He has been sitting with the invalid and is pleased to say that she is sleeping somewhat normally, but he is still much worried. Besides this, he is troubled with a strange sort of "haunt"—everything about this place reminds him of something, but his confused brain cannot seem to straighten it out. William now enters, talking with Antonio, the caretaker of the villa, who explains that the place is for sale because of the tragic disappearance of the master's child, the consequent death of the mother, and the long years of vain wandering indulged in by the half-unbalanced father. Now we have strong suspicions of how this is all going to turn out, but William sees no connection between this tale and his two *protégés*, and says that he may consider buying the place himself. He mentions this possibility to Lotario, and when he speaks the name of the place, "Cipriani," the old man gives a sudden start—it is the ringing of a bell in his memory. He goes hastily off on a mysterious errand. William is a little surprised at his behavior, but has no time to wonder, for in a moment the man is back with a letter containing upsetting news. Filina, furious at his desertion, is most unwisely following him up. By the date of the letter, she is due to arrive just about now. William doesn't care a fig for the woman, but if she dares to annoy Mignon, there will be trouble. He looks in at the door of the sick-room and is surprised to meet the invalid, walking a bit unsteadily but very happily toward him. Mignon has changed. Illness and white robes makes her look older, her elfin charm is gone, but in its place is a languorous and sweet seriousness which William certainly finds very fascinating. The girl, having been unconscious most of the time since her rescue, is unprepared for his change of heart—can hardly believe so much joy is really hers. In reply to all his melodious love-making, she still insists that she is the same Mignon.

"Oh, no—not at all!" sings William. "You are my heart's darling."

But Mignon remembers a certain actress, who did once considerably engage his affections—what of her?

"She is forgotten," declares William ardently.

"Oh, then, if that is true, Mignon may perhaps dare to be a little happy now?"

But before she can say what she feels, the hateful coloratura

voice is heard outside, "*I'm fair Titania.*" It was imprudent of Filina to thus announce herself, for she never does gain entrance; and the effect upon Mignon is disastrous. With a great effort of repression, the girl decides to let her fond secret perish in her breast. But William, worried at her distracted look, assures her that it was a dream and that she, Mignon, is and always will be all in all to him. She is still skeptical and fears that old Lotario is really the only one who loves her.

At this very moment Lotario comes through the great door at the back; but what a changed creature! Richly dressed, smiling, urbane, with the gleam of enlightenment in his eye, he steps forward and speaks words of welcome to them. "Welcome?" questions William, a little surprised, as he was under the impression that *he* was host here. It seems that the simple mention of the Villa Cipriani was, just as we supposed, enough to right the confused brain of the old man and that he suddenly remembered that it was his family homestead and himself the lord of everything there. Having made a few pleasing excursions about, he has discovered a small casket which contains some trifles belonging to his dear little lost daughter. A girdle, a tiny bracelet, too small even for Mignon's dainty wrist, and a prayer-book. Suddenly Mignon, as if in a trance, begins to sing a little prayer. "Why," gasps Lotario, with great emotion, "that prayer is in this book! You, Mignon, are my long-lost daughter, Sperata!" Mignon confesses that the whole place has seemed vaguely familiar ever since she came, and that it must be so. The two embrace joyously, and William, feeling very much left out of the picture, hastens to assert his claim to be included in the family.

The shock of all this has been a little too much for the convalescent. Happiness is still a novelty to her. Half-swooning, she sinks to a couch; but as William bends over her, anxious and adoring, she finds that she has just strength enough to sing an echo of her lovely song, "*Connais-tu le pays?*" It has all come true, they are in that happy land, to live, we hope, not to die.

The curtain falls.

I PAGLIACCI

By RUGGIERO LEONCAVALLO

First Sung in Milan, 1892

THIS brief opera always goes in double harness. Sometimes it is coupled with a ballet, occasionally with a try-out of a one-act novelty, but its time-honored running mate is *Cavalleria Rusticana*—however, more of that in another chapter. *Pagliacci* itself is a very bright particular jewel, a masterpiece of *Italianismo*, and a veritable life-saver and never-failing-help-in-time-of-need, as every canny impresario knows. In the late halycon days, let Caruso only be announced as Canio, and an hour afterwards not a seat was to be had in the entire Metropolitan; even with lesser lights heading the bill, empty places are few and far between and standees as thick as sparrows on the rail.

A conventional overture is no sooner well under way than we are startled to see the curtains part for a moment to allow a traditionally clad clown to step to the footlights.

"Permit me, ladies and gentlemen . . ." he sings tentatively, then gaining confidence, launches forthwith into one of the most spectacular and overworked of baritone solos now extant. It is the famous *Prologue*, in which Tonio, dressed as Taddeo, takes the audience into his confidence as to what is about to transpire on the stage. He hints that Tragedy will stalk grimly in a tinsel setting, and reminds us that players are not puppets, but men and women with as much if not more than the usual equipment of passions and heartbeats. Having successfully stirred us to the warmest anticipation, he signals behind him to let the play begin, and slips into the wings as the curtain rises.

ACT I. We see the outskirts of a typical Calabrian village, with the peasantry *en fête* because of the Feast of the Assumption. Some strolling players have erected a tented stage on the right, and a parade for the purpose of publicity is now in progress. Eager villagers are gathered to see the finish, and evidently Thespians are rare in these parts, for the utmost enthusiasm is evi-

dent on every side. As the procession returns, drums and trumpets are heard amid the cat-calls of small boys, the chattering and singing of the men and women, and finally Beppe, dressed as Harlequin, appears leading a somnolent little donkey which draws a fantastically decorated cart from which Nedda, the leading lady, is distributing handbills and flashing smiles. Behind her is Tonio, whom we already have met, and Canio, her husband, who as Pagliaccio is having the most superb and noisy time with a large drum and a pair of cymbals. He is the hero of the opera and of the play within the opera, the proprietor of the barnstormers, as well as of the pretty Nedda. Mounting the cart, he addresses the eager crowd, promising a most diverting play at seven o'clock, and bidding them come early and bring their sweethearts.

Tonio comes up to help Nedda dismount, as the little donkey must be unharnessed, but Canio protests against such a liberty with his wife, and sends the clown off with a pair of smarting ears, and an ingrowing desire for vengeance. The cordial villagers urge Canio to drink with them at the tavern, and Beppe also joins them; but Tonio turns down the offer, as he must perform the donkey's evening toilet. One of the peasants, with misguided humor, is inspired to ask Canio if he is not afraid that Tonio will make love to Nedda during his absence, but Canio is in no mood for jest. "I may be beaten up in the play when I stop his love-making, but off the boards let him beware!" His tones are so emphatic that Nedda looks up alarmed, but Canio kisses her and sets the easily stirred yokel curiosity at rest.

Against an undertone of distant church-bells, bagpipers, who seem oddly out of place in Italy, now enter, followed by other holiday crowds, and the little party of actors join them as they all go off down the road singing a charming version of *Ding-Dong-Bell*.

Nedda, left alone, attends to a little domestic setting-to-rights and takes up a bit of mending. It is always delightful to observe the prima donna's facility with a needle, and one marvels at this humble talent miraculously surviving despite the indubitable private service of ladies' maids.

For a moment or two Nedda is distressed by the remembrance of the ferocious gleam in her husband's eye and his dark hints when he left, but the tranquil scene about her, and the songs of the birds in the tree-tops induce pleasanter thoughts, and she soon tries her voice against the feathered songsters above. As she finishes she is not at all pleased to see Tonio appearing in a stealthy manner, still less so when he confirms Canio's suspicions

by making most ardent love to her. That he is repulsive to her in the extreme she does not hesitate to show him, first with light mockery, and then with a cruel cut across the face with the donkey whip which is lying by. Tonio screams with pain and cries that Nedda shall pay for this, but that young person shrugs her shoulders and declares indifferently that his heart is as ugly and misshapen as his body.

Just then a voice softly calls "Nedda!" and she turns to behold Silvio, her peasant lover, climbing over the wall. She dashes toward him, warning him back, but he declares himself perfectly safe as he took pains to observe her colleagues fully occupied for the moment with the flowing bowl, as he passed the inn. She says he barely missed Tonio, however; but Silvio is very contemptuous of a clown as an enemy to be reckoned with, and proceeds at once to the object of his visit. Nedda must fly with him after to-night's performance, he is tired of waiting and giving way to Canio. Nedda is uncertain, she is not at all concerned with any moral question involved, for she holds nothing for repression in any form, but she is frankly afraid of results. Canio is dangerous when roused, and the get-away would be uncertain at best. However, love and passion finally overrule her caution, and she agrees, calling to Silvio's departing figure that she is his forever. Most unfortunately this imprudence is overheard in all its guilty vehemence by the very ears most concerned, for the unpleasant Tonio, still smarting under the whip-welt across his face, *did* see Silvio approaching and at once sped to the tavern to alarm the already inflamed husband. So Canio comes full upon Nedda's secret. He cannot catch the nimble Silvio, so turns to strangle his wife as an acceptable alternative when she refuses to divulge her lover's name. Beppe and Tonio restrain him with difficulty until the sly clown whispers in his ear that the lover is bound to attend the play to-night and cannot fail to reveal himself. As it is time for the actors to make up for their rôles, and the call of the grease-paint is, after all, strong in his blood, Canio agrees to await developments; and as a pale Nedda scurries away into the tent followed by Beppe and Tonio, he delays a moment to give tongue to the mounting tides of passionate sorrow which threaten to engulf his tempestuous Latin heart.

"*On with the play . . .* laugh, Pagliaccio, even through your tears!" he sings with open throat. This was Caruso's own song, no one ever did or ever can sing it and sob it as did he, but others can and do therein create the most sensuous of emotional reactions and elicit thunderous bravos from the ranks of devoted

compatriots. Unless he yields inartistically to the public's "Bis!" Canio then disappears under his tent flap and the curtain falls.

ACT II is concerned with the time-honored dramatic expedient of a play within a play. Under the trees benches are arranged. While Tonio beats the drum, Beppe lights the stage lamps, and as the spectators begin to crowd the benches, Nedda passes among them in her Columbine costume, collecting the money, and pauses a moment to whisper a warning in Silvio's ear. It is an excellent audience, some of the men having to stand as there are not places enough. They are very expectant and properly impressed.

A bell tinkles loudly, the miniature curtains part, and the play begins. A bare little room is shown with two doors and a window. Columbine (Nedda), the immortal romantic, is walking about apprehensively. Pagliaccio (Canio), her husband, is away for the night, and she is planning to enjoy herself thoroughly. She has sent the stupid Taddeo (Tonio) to market, and awaits the coming of her lover Harlequin (Beppe). Such is the situation on the mimic stage, and Leoncavallo has carefully outlined for listening ears the difference between the real play and the puppets; music charming, but of a certain wooden conventionality runs through the entire action in the little theater, only emerging with the broader sweep of the score when the tragedy oversteps the bounds of the smaller stage. A doll-like minuet accompanies Columbine's soliloquy, but it is interrupted by the sound of a guitar plucked beneath the window. "The signal!" exclaims Columbine rapturously, and listens to Harlequin's serenade played off-stage. Then she seats herself nonchalantly with her back to the door through which Taddeo now appears from market, with a basket on his arm. The servant, with an ardor distinctly reminiscent of their scene as Tonio and Nedda, proceeds to make burlesque love to Columbine, who will have none of it, and beckons through the window instead to her guitar-playing friend. Harlequin scrambles through the window with a bottle in his hand, which he places conspicuously on the floor by the table. Then he turns his attention to Taddeo whom he promptly despatches with a tweak of the ear and a skilfully placed kick, to the intense satisfaction of the slapstick-loving spectators. Taddeo, blessing the lovers unctuously, departs in amiable mood, to more applause.

Now Columbine sets her little table with a certain precise quality to her movements which suggests the marionette. At last the two are seated stiffly before their repast, and exchange the most loving remarks. All this has been to the continued under-

current of the haunting little minuet, but now a divergence occurs. The diners hear simultaneously the stamping footsteps of an angry husband upon the warpath. Harlequin, hastily directing Columbine to pour into Pagliaccio's wine a sleeping potion which he brought, exits as he came, through the window. As Pagliaccio enters he hears his wife's words, which chance to be those used in real life by Nedda that morning, "To-night I am thine forever!" and advances uncertainly into the room. The unfortunate words have temporarily thrown him out of his part, but he takes up the cue heavily, and questions his wife about her recent visitor. Columbine parries in the words of her rôle.

"You are drunk!" she jeers.

But her husband is insistent, "Some one has been here within the hour!" There is a tone in his voice which Nedda, the actress, does not like.

"You are early!" she goes on parrot-like.

"But in time!" rejoins Pagliaccio, with solemn meaning.

Columbine now summons Taddeo to explain himself as the incumbent of the extra chair at the table, and he, obligingly defending Columbine's innocence, is rewarded by a roar of laughter.

But now Canio has stepped out of his rôle. "Tell me the name of your lover!" he thunders at his terrified bride.

"Pagliaccio!" rebukes Nedda, still trying desperately to stay in character, but she unfortunately gives him the very cue he wants.

"No, Pagliaccio no more, but a man of flesh and blood . . . who picked you from the gutter and gave you his name and love!"

Columbine now collapses on a chair and hides her frightened face from the audience, who are beginning to stir uneasily before such impassioned acting. "It must be real!" whisper the women, who are promptly silenced by their lords. Silvio fidgets uneasily.

A quick question, and a smothered answer from the two on the stage, and once more the maddened Canio puts the question, "Tell your lover's name!" Again the little tinkling minuet which came in with Harlequin has been resumed and continues a mechanical undertone to the tragedy of the present scene. Something of its brave lilt comes to Nedda's rescue; she makes a last attempt to face the situation down.

"My, what a tragic creature you are to-night!" she improvises with a laugh; but the notes freeze on her lips, for Canio has snatched a knife from the table.

"His name!" shrieks the frantic actor.

"Never!" screams Nedda, and tries to elude him.

Now the spectators are sure that this is no acting. The women

cry and turn over the benches in their flight. Silvio tries to break through the confusion to the stage; but it is too late.

"Take that, and *that*, and *that*!" cries Canio, as he stabs the fluttering Columbine, who rolls over and over down the steps with artistic disregard for subsequent black-and-blue spots which will be sure to adorn her person. With her last breath she cries her lover's name in frantic demand for his help—so Tonio's nasty little scheme worked after all, the lover is revealed, and the crazed Canio finishes up the débâcle with a vital thrust at Silvio. Amid the shrieks of the women and the growls of the men, Canio suddenly comes out of his frenzy and stares blankly at the bodies lying there. Stunned, he drops his knife. "So the comedy finishes!" is all that he can say, but he is still able to sob with abandon, as the curtain falls.

PELLEÁS AND MÉLISANDE

By CLAUDE DEBUSSY

First Sung in Paris, 1902

THIS opera is unlike any other, in that it is scarcely an opera at all, nor yet is it a music drama. It is more a dream induced by music, or music born of a dream. It is vague, shadowy, incoherent. The libretto, taken from the play by Maeterlinck, is in itself the visualization of a faded medieval tapestry, hardly even a story, a succession of moods, of pictures, of emotions, frail and pale with the dust of the ages. As such no one but Debussy could have set it to music, and conscious of the fantastic undertaking, he has confined all his melodic phrasing to his instruments, leaving the characters on the stage to tread the vague measures of their poetry, unfettered by the exigencies of lyrical form.

There is a short, somber prelude in the orchestra, and then the curtains part to reveal the depths of a great forest. In the foreground is a little spring beside which sits a beautiful and unhappy maiden. This is Mélisande—she is always unhappy—it is her *leitmotif*. Golaud, baritone, enters, having lost his way while hunting. He has wandered here because he saw a trail of blood, but is startled to see the weeping damsel and approaches her to inquire the cause of her distress. Mélisande raises her head like a hunted creature and starts to run away, entreating him in accents of terror not to touch her. Golaud reassures her. He remarks upon her extreme beauty, but this very admiration adds to her alarm and again she wails, "If you touch me I will drown myself!"

Golaud humors her—see, he will remain by the tree, but she must tell him who has wronged her.

"Every one!" cries Mélisande, sobbing afresh, but refusing to be explicit. Patiently Golaud tries to find out whence she came, but all she will say is that she ran away.

From the beginning there is a vagueness and incoherency about

Mélisande that, were she not so beautifully mysterious, would be very aggravating. Suddenly Golaud looks into the spring and sees a golden gleam and asks what it is. "Ah," says Mélisande casually. "That? That is the crown he gave me. It fell off while I was weeping." She does not explain who "he" is and ignores Golaud's question. When he seems concerned over the beauty and value of the thing and would retrieve it, she shrieks in dismay. If he pulls it out she herself will plunge in! Golaud, mystified, agrees to leave it, but it is apparent that his curiosity is roused.

Presently Mélisande stops sobbing long enough to ask his name and he tells her with some pride that he is Golaud, oldest grandson of Arkel, king of Allemonde. Mélisande seems unimpressed. She rather listlessly comments on the gray in his hair and beard, then suddenly she is frightened again. Why does he look at her so? Golaud says he is studying her eyes, which look so startled, as if she never closed them. Does she? To which she replies, "What are you doing here?"

Golaud explains how he became lost during a hunt, then returns to the more interesting subject of herself. How old may she be? With maddening irrelevance she answers that she is beginning to feel very cold. So Golaud urges her to come with him, the dark forest is no place for frightened women, alone after dark. She resists, quivering and sobbing when he would take her hand. Patiently he assures her again that he will not touch her and urges her to come. "Where?" she sobs, and he has to admit that he himself does not know—he, too, is lost.

The scene then changes to the castle of King Arkel. He and his daughter-in-law, Geneviève, mother of Golaud and young Pelléas, are reading a letter which Golaud has written to his brother. It describes his encounter with Mélisande and his subsequent marriage to her. Apparently he has had to take her much on faith. He has never been able to elicit from her her age, home, or previous history. At every attempt she takes refuge in sobs and tears. Golaud would like to bring this strange bride back to his home, but hesitates because of Grandfather Arkel, who may by this marriage have had some of his political plans disarranged. However, if Pelléas can smooth things over for him and all is clear, a lighted lamp hung in the sea-tower of the castle will bring about his return.

Geneviève anxiously awaits Arkel's reaction to this, but the old man, now as ever, is perhaps the most human of all the characters. He believes in destiny. He had hoped perhaps to bring about an advantageous marriage with one Princess Ursula, but if this is

Golaud's choice he will abide by it. The man has been markedly lonely since the death of his first wife—this may cheer him. "At any rate, nothing happens without some use," he adds philosophically.

Geneviève eulogizes her eldest son—such a prudent man, so strong and brave and such a good father to little Yniold, his son. She hopes this strange infatuation will not change him.

Here Pelléas enters; young, handsome, dreamy-eyed—the orchestra describing him on flute and clarinet. His grandfather wishes to look at him for some reason, and orders him to the light. But Pelléas is impatient. He has had also a letter from a comrade who is dying. He wishes to go to him at once. Arkel is loath to let him. "Stay by us and see us through the return of Golaud," he urges, and adds that Pelléas' sick father who lies upstairs has a stronger claim than friendship. So Pelléas acquiesces with medieval docility, and promising to light the tower-light for his brother, goes out, followed by the others.

The third scene takes us to the terrace outside the castle. Apparently Mélisande has arrived and is getting acquainted with her mother-in-law. The two women talk together. Mélisande, ever sad and gloomy, complains of the thick forest which has all but swallowed up the castle, but Geneviève is proud of it. "It is a wonder to all who see it!" she declares with satisfaction. "However, we have, too, the brightness of the sea upon the other side," she adds happily. Mélisande is, as usual, not listening. She has heard a sound which alarms her. "It is Pelléas," exclaims his mother, "grown tired of waiting." The young man joins them and all speak of the dark evening and the grumbling of an approaching storm. They go over to watch a vessel putting out of the harbor, and Mélisande recognizes it as the ship which brought her here. She is distressed that it is risking such stormy seas. "It is getting very dark," remarks Pelléas. Is it a hint? At any rate Geneviève withdraws promptly, using the care of little Yniold as an excuse, and suggests that Pelléas bring Mélisande in. He turns to her—already he is bewitched. He offers her his hand but she refuses—hers are full of pale flowers. So he guides her arm, gently leading her up the steep way. Even in those days methods were much the same: "I may go away to-morrow!" he declares.

"Oh, why, why?" wails Mélisande, stumbling toward the castle.

ACT II. The curtain reveals a fountain in the castle grounds

and the orchestra reveals the presence of Mélisande. She enters with Pelléas. She is in gayer vein than we have yet seen her, and gives little heed to Pelléas' tale of the miraculous healing powers of the fountain. She is happy in the clear brightness, in the stillness and intimacy of the place. Pelléas is charmed with this friendly mood and invites her to sit upon the fountain's rim and listen to its music, but Mélisande is playful. She will rather lie flat upon the marble and peer into the depths, seeking to see the bottom. Pelléas humors her, but denies the spring can have a bottom. It is as fathomless as the sea. The maiden is wilful. Perhaps if something were shining down there she might see. She leans over and splashes her white hands in its sparkle. Pelléas is alarmed and implores her to be careful. He tries to seize her hands. Her hair dips its ends in the pool. Ah, yes, Mélisande does not mind her hair, it is longer than her arms—than herself! She throws it like a heavy mantle over her shoulder. The sun dances upon its gold, for Mélisande has the most glorious hair in all the world. We shall be more concerned with it anon.

Something in her pose reminds Pelléas of the tale of Golaud's discovery of her. He questions her and she answers all quite simply, though ever avoiding *where* and *who* and *why*. As she talks she tosses a small object into the sunbeams and catches it. "Ah, I see something in the well!" she exclaims, with childish delight.

Pelléas is nervous. It is a golden finger ring she is tossing over the pool so recklessly, the ring Golaud gave her. He begs her to be careful, but she laughs and tosses it higher. Of course, inevitably it falls into the fountain. A distant clock strikes twelve. Instantly her mood changes, her habitual gloom descends like a cloak. Terror and tears threaten. Pelléas thinks that a little ring is not worth all this to-do—another can be found. He cannot see why she should fear to tell Golaud the truth about its loss. But she refuses to be comforted—her unhappy panic increases as they move toward the castle.

The ensuing scene shows the austere bedroom of Golaud, who is temporarily laid up by a mishap of the chase. As he rode through the forest, he tells Mélisande who sits beside him in wifely solicitude, he heard the castle bell strike twelve, whereupon his horse threw him against a tree and fell upon him. He is surprised to find himself alive. Mélisande is uncommunicative. She offers him water and a fresh pillow—she has detected a small blood-stain on the others. He is amused by her fastidiousness and will not accept her offer to sit beside him as he sleeps. Mélisande

is, through all this, quietly weeping as usual. Golaud asks her quite tenderly what the trouble is, but she only vouchsafes the obvious statement that she is unhappy, and denies that she has been hurt or offended.

"You are hiding something. Come, Mélisande, is it the King, Geneviève, Pelléas?"

"No" (more sobs), "not he!"

Well, then, perhaps she is tired of him, Golaud— Would she like to leave him?

Not that—in fact she wishes he would take her away with him. She does not feel she will live long!

Golaud is paternal. This is child's talk. It must be Pelléas who has hurt her—been surly, perhaps? Mélisande stops sobbing long enough to dissemble. "He speaks when we happen to meet, but that he dislikes me I read in his eyes."

"Come, come, he is young and rude, and this castle is old and dark and we within its walls are sick and dull. No wonder the poor child is depressed," muses Golaud.

"Yes, yes, it is true!" weeps his mournful wife. For the first time since she came she has seen the blue sky to-day! Golaud tries to comfort her and warm her pale little hands, so he notices that his ring is gone. She seems surprised.

"The ring?" But he insists. Where is the ring he gave her when they were wed? Again she needlessly and foolishly prevaricates. She remembers that she left the ring in the sea cave among the lovely shells. She will go and fetch it, but she must hurry, the tide rises. Golaud consents. For some reason he is much attached to the ring, but she must not go alone. Pelléas shall accompany her. Mélisande protests that he will not go.

Golaud is angry. Of course he will go. He will do whatever she asks him. Golaud knows Pelléas. So she goes out, frightened again, sobbing, making once more the habitual plaint that she is not happy.

In the next scene she and Pelléas are at the cave. Pelléas considers the expedition unnecessary—she should have told the truth, but now that she has gone so far she may as well see the place, so that she may describe it. But he will not venture in without light. As he talks of the beauties hidden by the dark suddenly a slanting moonbeam illumines the whole interior. We should not need the electrician's rays to make us see it, the whole orchestra shimmers and glitters with the silver radiance. The light reveals three ragged old beggars crouched in the grotto. Mélisande, as ever, is overwhelmed with terror and dismay. She begs Pelléas

to come away. She will not take his hand. More tears. "Well," says Pelléas philosophically, "we'll come some other time," and follows her quickly as the curtain falls.

ACT III. This is the scene in which Mélisande displays the longest golden hair ever seen on human head, to the complete undoing of Pelléas. It is wholly vibrant with poetic and musical ecstasy throughout its brief duration. It is evening and we are shown the garden and the exterior of the tower occupied by Mélisande. Within a lighted casement she is singing a little song about her hair and the unrelated fact that she was born on a Sunday. Pelléas, who by this time is never very far away, appears and calls to her, asking rather unnecessarily what she is doing. She leans out of the casement. A strand of gold falls over the ivy. "I comb my hair!" she asserts, and Pelléas cries that this brilliant strand he mistook for a moonbeam. He is on fire with the mystery and beauty of the summer night and implores her to come out to him—to give him her hands to kiss—at the very least to let down her hair to him, for to-morrow he is to go away.

Mélisande will grant him nothing unless he promises not to go—Good! He will stay. He craves her hands to kiss, but she puts him off. She thinks she sees a rose blooming there in the dusk and desires that he bring it to her. Pelléas is masterful—the rose can wait—so, yielding, she leans out to reach him her white hands, and all at once, like a magic cascade of perfumed gold, the glory of her marvelous hair falls over him, almost suffocating him with rapture. The man goes mad with ecstasy, the orchestra racing in full sympathy with the pounding blood in his veins. He bathes in her hair, he sends kisses along its golden wires, he tangles his hands in it and declares her his prisoner. In the midst of his effusion Mélisande's pigeons fly out of the tower, and she, ever apprehensive, begins to tremble at the omen. Some one is coming. Pelléas must let her go. But Pelléas is intoxicated, scarce heeding. She must stay. It is dark and she has let her hair become tangled in the vines.

Mélisande and the doves were right, however. Some one indeed approaches. Golaud himself by evil chance, peering about with a lantern. He has seen enough. Masking whatever may be his true emotions, he chides them lightly. "What children you are! It is too late for such pranks. Mélisande, it is unsafe to lean thus from your window. To bed, both of you!"

The next scene is brief, apparently unrelated to the rest of the tale, more like a dark and sinister shadow passing briefly over their

faces. It is in the deep dungeons and caverns beneath the castle, and for some reason Golaud has enticed Pelléas there. We only catch a glimpse of them as Golaud, with rather horrid intensity, requests Pelléas to breathe the unpleasing odor of the sewer and to observe the steepness of the underground chasm. He, Golaud, will steady the boy while he gazes, but the dancing shadows, the foul vapors overwhelm Pelléas. The curtain falls a moment, and then we see them emerging once more above ground. Pelléas is joyous at being in the sunlit world. He raves over the scents and sounds of the summer noonday. He is not insensible of Mélisande standing in her casement.

Golaud decides that the time has come to warn his rash young brother in plain terms. He advises him to curb his ecstasies and desires. Although he, Golaud, made light of last night's affair, it was no light matter, and not the first of the indiscretions he has observed. A word to the wise, etc. Pelléas is older than Mélisande and he must go no further in this mad behavior. Before we can learn how Pelléas receives this advice the curtain falls.

We shall see how he heeds it in this brief scene. It is evening again outside the tower, and we have our first glimpse of the little Yniold, Golaud's son. Alas, his father is making unworthy use of the child's innocence and cupidity! He is bribing him with promise of many toy arrows to tell of his naïve impressions of his stepmother and Uncle Pelléas. Yniold, in infantile chirps, offers information of much interest. He will even show his dear papa how sweetly they kiss, when suddenly Mélisande's casement above their heads is illumined. Obeying an unworthy but pardonable impulse, Golaud lifts up his son high enough to peer into the room. He reports blithely that his new mamma and his nice uncle are even now together. With a groan, Golaud withdraws and brings the portentous act to a close.

ACT IV. A great room in the castle, with Pelléas and Mélisande meeting. Pelléas reports the imminent recovery of his father, and of his *clairvoyance* in advising him to go away with all speed, that death is hovering around him. Had Mélisande noticed how the whole castle seems to be coming to life? Even now people are approaching. He makes a last farewell and hastily exits. Mélisande is silent, listless, serene. When her lover is gone and the old king Arkel has entered she is gentle and kind to him. He is an amiable old man, always interested in the affairs of the young people. He is glad now for her sake that the invalid is better and the general atmosphere brighter. He wants her to be

happy—he does not like her wan and death-like look. He is human and warm, old Arkel. He would like a kiss from his beautiful grandchild—he has never had but one. *Mélisande* humors him and assures him that she has not been so very unhappy. But the words are scarcely spoken when *Golaud*, her husband, enters in a savage mood, his forehead bleeding from the prick of a thorn he has in some way encountered. When his wife would bathe it, he roughly shakes her off and sends her for his sword; she brings it trembling, staring, white as death, and *Golaud* questions her crazily—why does she look so at him? Does she fear he has found her out? Turning to *Arkel* he demands what he thinks of her blank eyes. “Only a great innocence,” parries *Arkel*.

The long-suffering *Golaud* has run amuck at last, however. With a cry, “Here at least is a use for your tresses!” he seizes his weeping wife by her famous hair and drags her back and forth, up and down, in a tempest of brutality, while moaning and sobbing, she submits without a struggle. Only grandfather *Arkel* finally intervenes and sends the incensed husband off. “Can he be drunk?” he gasps in shocked tones. “No!” sobs *Mélisande*, more lachrymose than ever before. “But his love is dead. Ah—I am not happy!” With this mild protest the scene ends.

The next is no more than a tableau, the meaning of which we may all guess for ourselves. Little *Yniold* is upon the terrace, trying in his childish way to pick up a stone which is too heavy for him. Finally he abandons his efforts and transfers his attentions to a passing flock of sheep and their shepherds. He wonders a little about them and runs off to ask.

The last scene of the act brings us once more to the fountain where *Mélisande* lost her ring. *Pelléas* and his orchestral theme are there. He is communing with himself over the advisability of departure, without waiting for *Mélisande*, but his ardent desire to empty his heart to her once more prevails, and he remains. Presently she calls and he draws her, with the assistance of the 'cellos, into the shadow of the trees. Here for the first time they verbally declare their love with raptures, kisses and embraces. She insists that this is God's truth—that only *Golaud* causes her to lie. Suddenly upon their idyl breaks the sound of sliding bolts and clanking chains. The castle gates are closed—they are outcasts! This only fans their reckless ardor. They clasp one another in ecstasy and watch the shadows of themselves upon the flower beds also entwine. But *Mélisande*, the apprehensive, hears a foot-fall. It will be *Golaud*, who must have witnessed the whole scene!

Pelléas catches her terror, begs her to flee, lest they both be

killed, but Mélisande would welcome that, she says. Suddenly with a horrid cry Golaud does come, downing Pelléas by the fountain's edge with one blow of the sword, then pursuing Mélisande who runs screaming toward the forest.

ACT V shows the result of all this. Mélisande is in the great canopied bed, sick unto death, and beside her stand a venerable physician and her self-reproaching and penitent husband, and Arkel. The doctor is hopeful, and would make light of her case, but Arkel reads it otherwise. Mélisande herself rouses enough to ask for an opened casement, in order to see the setting sun. She is bewildered. "How many people are here?" She is a little incoherent. Arkel offers to send the doctor away and urges her to speak to her husband, who now throws himself on his knees beside her and weeps for her condition and begs her forgiveness. Mélisande is willing to grant it, but wonders just what he speaks of. Her mind wanders gently. Golaud, even in this extremity, cannot let well enough alone. Adjuring her to tell the truth in the presence of death, he tries to find out if her love for Pelléas was a guilty one.

He succeeds only in hastening her departing spirit. "The truth? The truth?" she gropes.

Arkel and the doctor enter in time to hear Golaud's last cruel questioning. "You will kill her!" they protest.

"I have," he answers.

And now, according to the medieval habit, the entire household begins to gather to witness the demise. No one calls them, but they are always there.

Mélisande has been given her baby to lie beside her, but she is cold. She gazes in wonder on the baby's face and declares that she pities the little creature. Her eyes brim with tears, her breathing grows fainter, the three men by her bed see her stretch out her arms, then fall back—vanquished.

Golaud would call to her, but Arkel restrains him. He has done enough harm. Let her go in peace. With a great cry of misunderstanding, Golaud sobs that it has not been his fault, this tragedy. Arkel does not blame him, but he bewails the sadness, the pitiful sadness of it all.

As the servants fall on their knees the physician nods—all is over! Golaud's sobs are terrible to hear; but Arkel, the dear old gentleman, is lovably human to the end. It is he who remembers the little baby. Taking it up tenderly he leads them all away from the death chamber.

The curtain.

RIGOLETTO

By GIUSEPPE VERDI

First Sung in Venice, 1851

THE story of *Rigoletto* is not pap for babes, one might even call it salacious with perfect accuracy; but do not let that deter the gentle listener, for after all, when it comes to a choice of the strictly chaste and moral libretti, one is limited indeed. And *Rigoletto* is an old and oft-told tale; no less a person than Victor Hugo created it under the title, "*Le Roi S'Amuse*," and it has been translated for the English stage as "The Fool's Revenge." Verdi has changed the names of the principals, and transposed the drama a little for operatic needs, but he has clothed it in such a superb cloak of inspired and mellifluous music as to completely neutralize any moral acid therein. And who would not brave a shock or two, especially in a foreign tongue, to hear the glorious and world-loved *quartet* and "*La donna è mobile*"?

ACT I opens in one of the great ballrooms in the palace of the Duke of Mantua. He is hero, tenor and villain of the opera, although the baritone of the title-rôle holds our chief interest. This duke is a person of few admirable qualities; his principal diversion seems to be the taking and breaking of fair ladies' hearts and reputations; an utter Don Juan, but a gay, dashing and captivating fellow. As the curtain rises, he is talking with his companions about a young girl, living in obscurity, who has caught his fancy—yet so light o' love is he that the Countess di Ceprano, just crossing the floor, calls forth from him the most extravagant admiration. The whole subject of women seems to require lyric comment, so he sings his first aria, "*Questa o quella*" ("This one or that one"), likening himself to a bee flitting from flower to flower. It is thrilling to fancy what must have been the sensations of an audience at the Metropolitan one November night twenty years ago when Caruso poured forth his first golden notes in this song.

At the conclusion of the aria, and the acknowledgment of the

applause, the Duke perceives the Countess on the point of departure and runs to protest. The Countess is arch but discreet, and just now bent upon obeying certain orders from her husband. The Duke kisses her hand with a flourish just as the humpbacked jester, Rigoletto, enters and proceeds to make cruel sport of the Count's discomfort. Rigoletto, enjoying the complete license of jester and favorite, takes huge delight in sarcastic gibes and brutal jests at the expense of all the courtiers. Needless to say, he is intensely unpopular, as we see as soon as he is gone, for one of the nobles comes in fairly bursting with delicious news. Of all things in the world, Rigoletto has been discovered to have a young and beautiful mistress! The nobles laugh enormously at this idea of the deformed and elderly Cupid.

When the Duke returns, followed by his jester, they are speaking of ways and means for removing inconvenient husbands. The humpback's uncouth jests anger Ceprano, who demands that he be punished—a suggestion seconded by all the other victims of the malicious tongue; but Rigoletto well knows he is safe and that no one will lay hands on the Duke's favorite. He does not hear the aside in which a secret plan is being hatched for his undoing.

Suddenly a diversion occurs in the excited entrance of the Count Monterone, who bursts in unceremoniously to denounce the Duke before the whole assembly as the betrayer of his daughter. His rash words only result in instant arrest for himself, and a mocking parody of his distress by the fool, Rigoletto. The impassioned gentleman therefore draws himself up for a moment before he goes off to prison, and hurls a mighty curse upon the head of the Duke's jester. Rigoletto, like all his contemporaries, fears such maledictions with a holy fear, and now cringes and writhes in abject terror under the scorching words as the curtain falls.

The scene changes to a humble alley in Mantua, at the rear of the Ceprano palace. On the left is a small house in a garden, with an outside staircase, and a wall which bisects the stage and ends at the footlights. This is the obscure dwelling of Rigoletto, whom we now see outside in the street, walking with bowed head and muttering darkly of the curse recently launched against him. A shabby figure, the ruffian Sparafucile, having deduced with keen perspicacity that the gentleman has an annoying enemy, steps up and offers to remove any such for a fair price, one-half in advance and one-half on delivery of the corpse. Rigoletto, not having yet reached such extremity, dismisses the rogue, but prudently records his address, and sings a melodious soliloquy in

which he compares his tongue to the assassin's weapon. Then turning, he enters his gate, and is greeted demonstratively by Gilda, his daughter—who should be young, slim and beautiful, but is more often otherwise, for she must also be the possessor of a highly developed coloratura voice, which seldom dwells in the willowy forms of the very young. Apparently her father has kept his identity and his manner of employment secret from his child, for in their ensuing conversation she shows a touch of curiosity about these things. He does not confide in her, however, and only seems anxious that Giovanna, the housekeeper, watch vigilantly over her charge, permitting Gilda no liberty except to go to church. The women assure him that they are most circumspect, and he takes his leave. As he opens the door a swift figure glides in unnoticed behind him and, flinging hush-money to Giovanna, hides in a shadow.

As soon as her parent has departed, Gilda has an attack of conscience and thinks she probably should have told him about the young and handsome student whom she has met once or twice at church and with whom she really believes herself to be falling in. . . .

"Love!" finishes the Duke, stepping forward and dropping his cloak—for it was he who crept in behind her father. So the deceived girl becomes more rapturous every moment, and the rascally Duke finds her innocence piquant to his jaded palate. He had recognized Rigoletto at the gate and heard his farewell, so he knows of their relationship, and is a little uneasy to be here. However, he sings a tuneful and familiar ditty about love being the sun of life, and joins her in an impassioned duet before he tears himself away. In answer to her pleading for his name, he has given an assumed one and now as soon as he has left, she bursts into trills and cadences of lyrical rapture over its dull syllables, "Walter Malde." "*Caro nome!*" ("Beloved name!") she warbles in one of the most pyrotechnical of soprano airs, and goes up the outside staircase to her room, still giving rapturous tongue to her emotion.

Now on the other side of the dividing wall something seems to be on foot. Three of the nobles, including Ceprano, steal in cloaked and masked, followed by a group of dark-browed retainers. It is the party of Rigoletto's enemies come to carry off his supposed mistress—the little practical joke planned a while ago in the palace. They observe the lovely maiden as she ascends the stairs and comment freely and incredulously on her beauty. Suddenly a complication occurs in the return of Rigoletto, drawn back

to his home by some inexplicable feeling of alarm. The nobles concoct a scheme by which they first convince him that they are there to abduct the wife of Ceprano, and then enlist his aid. In the darkness he hardly notices that they not only mask but blindfold him, and he, delighting in such escapades, willingly steadies the ladder, placed as he supposes, against the rear wall of the Ceprano palace. It is an exciting moment, and the conspirators sing a remarkable whispering chorus "*Zitti, zitti*," as they await results. It is only when Rigoletto hears a faint scream and tears off his mask that he sees the ladder against his own wall. He observes a fallen scarf belonging to Gilda, and realizes that his perfidious friends have borne off his daughter! With a despairing cry he recognizes the workings of the Curse, and falls in a faint.

ACT II takes place in a room in the Duke's palace. We see on the wall a portrait of himself and his Duchess, the first hint we have had that such a lady exists. She is doubtless too well-bred to appear in such an embroglio as the opera proves to be.

The Duke is alone and much agitated. He returns later on the evening of the abduction to further sip the charms of his flower-like Gilda, only to find her gone; and, like all spoiled persons of his caste, he now most madly desires the one thing denied him. But he is not to suffer long. In a moment the room is filled with his courtiers, who are agog with the amusing joke which they have perpetrated. Merrily they recount the adventure and the confounding of the jester; but the Duke suddenly pricks up his ears, recognizing in the supposed mistress of Rigoletto the girl for whom he has searched in vain. When he hears that she is here in his own palace, he hails the news with glad acclaim and loses no more time in conversation. He departs with purposeful eye, and our inference is that Gilda's situation is precarious.

Now into the hall comes a figure of great pathos. Rigoletto, troubled and heavy-hearted over the disappearance of the one creature in all the world he loves, has nevertheless assumed his motley and is trying desperately to enact his rôle of jester as usual, lest the courtiers suspect his anxiety and plague him further. He returns their taunts and gibes, and sings in a pitiful effort at playfulness that hides stark tragedy, when he learns that Gilda is here in the palace unprotected and the Duke for the moment unaccounted for. The courtiers are intensely amused when he protests that the girl is his daughter and bar the door when he would go in search of her. In the midst of his ravings, suddenly a distraught maiden, with loosened hair and wild countenance as sym-

bols of late misadventure, runs quickly in with a despairing cry of "Fâther!" and throws herself into the humpback's arms. He embraces her rapturously, scarce listening, in his joy at her recovery, to her tale of shame. Soon, however, her gasping words make their impression and he turns to the nobles, begging them to have at least tact enough to withdraw, which they do, still chuckling over the merry jest.

When at last father and child are alone, the wretched girl unburdens her heart of the whole history of her love and betrayal, and he sings with her in consoling phrases a duet of great strength and beauty, beginning "*Tutte le feste al tempio*." Gilda confesses that her father's words have saved her reason, and he eagerly plans to leave Mantua as soon as he can settle his affairs. They are interrupted by an armed guard passing through the room transferring old Count Monterone to another dungeon, and Rigoletto wipes out all resentment of this fellow-victim's curse, by vowing vengeance for them both upon their common enemy. When Monterone has gone on, Gilda in alarm turns to her parent. Could he mean, by any chance, that he plans evil to her betrayer? The foolish girl, it seems, is still, for all her woe, enamored of the creature; but Rigoletto is adamant, and the curtain falls.

ACT III is the scene wherein our waiting ears are to be gratified by all they came to hear. It is the shabby hostelry and ill-favored den of the ruffian, Sparafucile, whither by the magnet of an attractive and unprincipled sister, Maddalena, he lures his intended victims. The scene is constructed somewhat similar to that of the previous act, with the stage bisected by a wall, on the right of which is a dark road bordering the river, and on the left the courtyard of the inn and a wing of the dilapidated building, showing both upstairs and down. Outside the gate, huddled in the darkness we discover two cloaked figures, who betray by their voices that they are Rigoletto and Gilda, here at the father's instigation to witness the infidelity of the Duke in all his wickedness and thus to quiet forever the trusting girl's doubts.

Within the courtyard, by the light of a dirty lantern, Sparafucile is cleaning his sword and belt significantly. Soon our friend the Duke, in a soldier's uniform, enters by another door and demands shelter and a bottle of wine. Gilda is unable to suppress a little cry of distress. Worse things, however, are in store for her. As her perfidious lover awaits his refreshment he lustily sings of the fickleness of the opposite sex and the great charm of the same, in his most famous aria, "*La donna è*

mobile." On a Caruso night this song was given precedence in importance over the great *quartet* soon to follow, and made the apex of the opera; but even in ordinary performances with any fairly good tenor it is certain of vociferous demands for encore.

Now Sparafucile, having made several false attempts to enter during the applause, succeeds in bringing in the wine with two glasses thoughtfully provided. Quickly on his heels comes Maddalena, a coarsely pretty woman in gypsy dress. The Duke, without hesitating a moment, rises to embrace her, and Sparafucile slips out to the road to demand of Rigoletto if, and when, the murder shall take place. Rigoletto bids him wait and he retires while father and daughter apply their scandalized eyes to the chinks in the wall, to observe the Duke's behavior. He and Maddalena are getting along very well, although she teases him about the notorious number of his conquests. When he catches her about the waist she screams vulgarly, and the Duke grows rather nervous—it would never do in the world to be discovered in this questionable place! However, Maddalena's red lips and coquettish ways lure him on, and in a moment he is kissing her and offering her marriage. This being an entirely new idea to the gypsy, she thinks he is drunk, which he doubtless is, and they argue and flirt themselves straight into the beginning of the famous and long-expected *quartet*—the shocked and distressed protests of Gilda and her father on the other side of the wall completing the four voices. This *quartet*, together with the *Lucia Sextet*, holds first place among all the compositions for concerted voices in existence, and the phonograph records of this number have been best-sellers from their first appearance. It is a marvelously constructed piece of work, being in reality two separate duets interwoven and finally united in a climax of sheer glory, and deserves all the fame and plaudits which it has received.

Exhausted by emotion, and feeling that by this time Gilda has surely seen enough to cure her, Rigoletto sends his unhappy daughter home to change her clothes to those of a boy, in order to make the journey to Verona in greater safety. He promises to follow as soon as he has attended to a certain matter. As soon as she is gone he summons Sparafucile and is ready to strike the bargain. He puts ten crowns in the rogue's dirty paw, promising the other ten when the Duke's body shall be delivered to him in a sack, here, and shortly after midnight. The assassin offers to complete the job and throw the corpse into the river, but his client reserves this bit of enjoyment for himself and goes off.

Now rather a bad storm seems to be brewing, and the Duke de-

cides that he had better take a room here for the night; so with a few fond words to Maddalena, he follows the host upstairs to an apartment where we fear he will be dangerously exposed to the elements. He seems indifferent and sleepy, however, and singing a snatch of his famous song, nonchalantly lies down and blows out the light.

In the room below, the plot is hatching. Maddalena is interested in the price her brother is to receive for the bloody deed, and thinks twenty crowns too cheap for such an altogether charming gentleman. Obeying her brother's command, she goes quietly upstairs and removes the sleeping victim's sword; but some appeal of his handsome person helpless in sleep has touched her heart and she begins to plead that his life be spared. Sparafucile listens, but he has never disappointed a client and will not do so this time. Maddalena is full of ingenious schemes. Why not murder the jester instead, when he comes and so get the money just the same? Her brother, with a distorted survival of professional honor, repudiates the notion. He will, however, make this concession: if any one seeks admittance before midnight (small chance on such a night!) he will promptly murder that person instead of Maddalena's new lover upstairs.

Now it happens that Gilda, taking less time than she thought to assume her boyish garments, has wandered back like a moth to the flame, to feed her soul on further agonies, and with her ear pressed to a crack in the wall has heard this nefarious scheme. Without hesitation, this fond and foolish girl decides to offer herself in sacrifice to save the unworthy life of her betrayer, so she promptly knocks at the gate. There is a gasp, a moment of apprehension from the two in the courtyard, then Sparafucile, having found what he sought in the kitchen, bids his sister open the gate. A shock, a moan, then muffled silence and darkness. All is over.

Soon Rigoletto advances outside, heavily cloaked and gloating over the gruesome joy awaiting him. By the light of a candle he counts the gold into the rogue's palm, and is left alone with the heavy sack. Exulting in the accomplishment of vengeance, he lifts his burden preparatory to dragging it to the river, when suddenly his incredulous ears are conscious of the lilt of a hatefully familiar song. "*La donna è mobile!*" chants a luscious tenor voice, as the Duke in perfect health and spirits mounts the ramparts at the rear, and goes off toward home, drawing ~~out~~ his melody to its full length as he disappears. The storm having subsided, he has wisely decided to seek better quarters, all uncon-

scious of his narrow escape. Rigoletto, confused and desperate, shakes his hairy fist at the departing figure, then turns to his gruesome burden. If that was the Duke, then who is this? His trembling hands cut the cords, and by a faint flash of lightning he sees all too well.

Gilda, however, in spite of her rough treatment, has revived enough to recognize her parent, and with surprising endurance insists upon singing before she dies, a melodious farewell and appeal for forgiveness, not only for her own act, but for the aristocratic libertine whom she has loved so unwisely.

Rigoletto, staggering under the appalling tragedy, can only sob and mutter that the Curse has certainly done its work, as the curtain falls.

THE RING OF THE NIBELUNGEN

By RICHARD WAGNER

First Performed in Complete Sequence at Bayreuth, 1876

WAGNER's greatest work, *The Ring*, is also very generally conceded to be the greatest work in all the world for the lyric stage. Whole libraries of books have been written upon the subject, which has inexhaustible aspects of philosophy, sociology, religion, poetry, history, the theory of music, *et ad infinitum*, according to whatever direction one's tastes may run. Doubtless many of these learned commentators could, as G. B. S. so acutely suggests, show Wagner a treasury of hidden meanings and interesting symbolism which would surprise the composer himself. Wagner, however, was one of those rare humans who really deserved the name of Genius, and who created not only through conscious inspiration, but with unconscious intuition, so that whatever his analytical devotees discover in his works is as truly authentic as the more obvious and simple beauties which we, the average opera-goers, seek and find.

For us it is perhaps enough to know that the four parts of *The Ring* are chapters in an epic allegory, and that elemental passions such as greed, vengeance, the lust for power, the impulse through fear to lie and cheat; that axioms such as, Everything of value costs something, or, There is no deed good or bad which does not involve others; that the principles of retribution, and redemption by self-immolation . . . all of these are the universal experience of every creature walking this planet, from those early misty morning years of the gods and demi-gods, right down to the present days of opera singers and music critics, with all the ages in between.

So, as you watch the unfolding of this mighty drama, read into it anything or nothing, as you please . . . you will be sure, nevertheless, to carry away from it, to gild the commonplace of your days, some greater measure of glory than you have yet known.

The Ring is in four parts, an introduction, *Das Rheingold*, followed by *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried*, and *Die Götterdämmerung*.

Leitmotifs run riot throughout, and blossom so luxuriously and obviously upon every possible occasion that it is scarcely necessary to bother with their names or functions. If one goes to *The Ring* at all, one is supposed to have some measure of intelligence; therefore, if every time that we see a sword conspicuous in the action we simultaneously hear a certain simple and descriptive musical phrase, by and by if we hear it on occasions when there is no sword visible, we very naturally conclude that the characters are talking or thinking about a sword. It is all just as simple as that! Sometimes, however, we have, instead of a sword, an emotion—anger, for instance; but it is quite as recognizable, Wagner paints graphically. So do not worry over that bugbear of the novice, the “motifs.” They are easily and naturally assimilated, and shall, moreover, not figure too prominently in this text.

DAS RHEINGOLD

This Prologue Opera is in one act, through which the music plays continuously and the auditorium is dark, although the stage picture changes four times.

Just before the curtain rises the orchestra begins to describe what we are to see. We hear murmuring the great, deep ground-currents of the river Rhine—or is it the serene, majestic undertones of the Golden Age before anything began to happen? We prefer the former, especially as the orchestra now begins to swim upward to lighter waters whence bubbles climb to the surface. It is, beyond a doubt, the Mighty River painted in music, and now the curtains part to show us the stage-manager’s conception of the same thing.

By the ingenious use of greenish-blue lights, gauze drops, flickering electric shadows, and a profusion of rocks and aquatic plants, we get the vivid impression of a giant aquarium, in which are swimming some strange fish. The most modest of mermaids are Woglinde, Wellgunde, and Flosshilde, but they need their trailing draperies to hide from us the little saddles in which they sit. To be a Rhine Daughter requires courage as well as voice, for it is a nerve-racking business to be suspended on a wire attached to an aerial trolley, and whisked hither and yon, up and down the space of a four-story proscenium, at the scarcely controlled fancy of an anxious stage-hand. For some it is a real ordeal, as for Margarete Ober, who always suffered from *mal-de-mer*. But the illusion is remarkable. The mermaidens disport themselves in sinuous

swoops and glides through the misty depths, waving their graceful arms and swaying rythmically upon the eddies and undulations of the water. They laugh playfully. They haven't a care in the world, and sing a watery, bubbling, flowing song of happiness as they swish about among the roots and grottoes. Soon, however, we observe some lumbering thing slipping and floundering about in the mud at the bottom. This is Alberich, one of Dwarfs, an ugly, evil creature of low impulses. Just now he seems to be trying to catch a Rhine-maiden. He climbs up the rocks with difficulty and grabs at their tails, but they elude him quite easily—for he is not on a wire—and laugh enormously at his appearance and his struggles.

In the midst of this primitive sport, a ray of the morning sun suddenly shines down through the water and brings to glowing life a large lump of gold which rests upon the peak of the tallest central rock. The maidens forget their games as the sight exerts its usual witchery. Joining hands, they sing adoringly to the beautiful object which has been in their possession for so long, without their ever having any idea what to do with it other than worship its sparkle. Heedlessly they chant of its magic properties and their confidence that it will never be taken from them. Only he who would abandon Love, could possibly accomplish the theft. Alberich pricks up his ears. He has been feeling quite injured because of the Nixies' indifference and scorn, and suddenly decides that Love is nothing to him anyhow—with his personal appearance his chances are not too good at best. He might as well have the Gold, and try his luck in another direction. Once more he lunges upward, scattering the mermaids, who shriek in frightened glee, and with a mighty effort seizes the Gold, and scrambles off down some slimy subterranean passage of his own. Woglinde, Wellgunde, and Flosshilde are promptly hysterical; nothing has ever happened in their peaceful lives before; they cannot conceive of such a calamity as this. Pursuing the dwarf as far as they dare, they moan and sob and wail piteously.

When the Gold disappears, their illumination is removed as well. It grows darker and darker. Finally we can see nothing, so we blindly follow the orchestra which leads us firmly and gently up through the water, with scarcely a backward glance at the tragedy we have just witnessed, and lands us safely on dry land, then helps us up a sunny slope to a high grassy place above the valley.

As the morning mists literally roll away, we behold Wotân, the Father of the Gods, and Fricka, his wife, sleeping in connubial

serenity, but in what must be great physical discomfort, upon a rock. They will, however, not have to pass any more nights out thus among the dews and damps, for yonder upon the high horizon is a majestic wonder-castle which has just been brought to completion while they slept. It is Walhalla, the home of the Gods. The orchestra perceives it at the same moment with us and straightway bestows upon it a broad and lovely phrase made of simple, fundamental chords, but breathing the dignity, solemnity, and grandeur of its mighty soaring battlements. This motif, or something else, awakens Fricka, who gazes in amazement at her new house. She had not expected it to be finished so soon and her joy is not unmixed, for now certain problems of payment will have to be met. She breaks rudely in upon the rosy dreams of her lord, who rubs his one sleepy eye and resents her brisk morning manner.

Wotan is really the hero of *The Ring*, however much his grandchild, Siegfried, may later seem to claim the honor. It is his wisdom and his errors, his strength and his weaknesses, his struggles and ultimate downfall, which make the play. He is no longer young, and yet he has no age. He is a handsome, gruff and majestic personality, with a flowing beard. He wears a very long bang upon one brow to hide the absence of the eye he ungrudgingly parted with to secure his present spouse—and his helmet, worn even in sleep, is trimmed with eagle's wings. Fricka is a practical, estimable, conventional lady, very domestic and without a trace of humor. Her quiet taste runs to plaited locks and iron jewelry.

Wotan is perfectly delighted with the castle and, man-like, he refuses to be annoyed for the moment with pecuniary affairs; but Fricka, it is to be feared, is somewhat of a nagger, and she soon forces him to consider the immediate problem of paying for all this splendor. It seems that Wotan made a very foolish agreement with the Giants when he engaged them to build it, and agreed, if the thing were completed within a certain brief time-limit, to pay with the person of the young Goddess Freia, keeper of the golden apples of youth. The Giants have fulfilled their contract, and now here is a nice situation! If Freia goes, with her goes the perennial youth of the Gods and Goddesses, who evidently depend upon her apples to keep away gray hairs and sagging muscles. This is indeed a problem, immediately dramatized by the terrified arrival of Freia herself, who is fleeing with all haste from the pursuing Giants. Wotan wishes desperately that Loge, his clever, crafty privy-councilor, would arrive and suggest some-

thing, and Fricka laughs mirthlessly at his lack of self-reliance. Freia's lovely spring-like music and her piteous cries to her brothers, Donner and Froh, avail her nothing, and on come the Giants, Fasolt and Fafner. The merest babe would recognize their heavy-footed, honest, ponderous motif.

In they stamp, driving their young pine saplings, which they use as walking sticks, into the ground with the assistance of the drum. These bluff, honest fellows have done a good piece of work; now, not unreasonably, they require their compensation. Wotan tries to evade the situation, makes a mirthless joke or two. Surely they didn't take seriously what he said about Freia? But it seems that they did, and what's more, carved the contract on Wotan's spear-haft. Disillusioned at this weakness in the character of their God, and exceedingly angry, they step forward to lay hands upon their prize; but now her brothers come in running, and Donner lifts his hammer to make an end of the foremost pursuer, when suddenly Wotan's spear interferes. The treaty holds—until something better can be devised.

Now at last we hear a flickering and a gusty quiver in the orchestra which introduces Loge. He is Flame, the destructive, unstable, tricky servant, the clever, mordant, restless agent of the God. He is a tenor, with a scarlet wig worn in irrepressible points, while his costume of orange, red, and yellow rags continually agitated by his nervous, fluttering movement, rarely avoids an unhappy suggestion of the *ballerina*. He is late because he has been searching up and down the world for a substitute which will be acceptable to the Giants, but he has found nothing to equal the value of woman's worth. And also, he has gone over Walhalla very carefully and checked up all the specifications, finding everything satisfactory, so he thinks there is nothing to do but pay the piper.

Wotan and all the Gods protest violently. Loge laughs. Only one creature, to his knowledge, has ever foresworn love of women. That is Alberich, the Dwarf, about whom the Rhine Daughters have just been complaining to him. His tale of the Gold, and the power of a Ring forged from it, interests the Giants strangely. They are already much bothered by the Nibelungs (the Dwarfs) and it would never do for their power to increase. After a short consultation they agree to accept the Nibelungen treasure in lieu of the payment agreed upon. Wotan is indignant. Who ever heard of such exorbitant demands! If any one gets the Gold, it will be the Rhine Daughters, to whom it belongs!

"Well, think it over!" the Giants exclaim, and having learned

craftiness from their betters, seize Freia without more ado, and drag her off as hostage.

Immediately the orchestra too withdraws both the young Goddess and its melodious description of her golden apples, and a gray and very unbecoming veil floats before the faces of the remaining deities. They look about at each other and exclaim with horror at their mutually withered aspect. "The apples!" cries Fricka, desperately, and Loge mischievously agrees that they are certainly an essential, and that something had better be done about it at once. So Wotan, although greatly against his better judgment, decides to take his first big downward step, and seize what is not his to pay his own just debts. It is strange how prehistoric downfalls seem connected with apples and the whims of woman.

Loge disappears through a crevice in the rocks, sending up after him so much smoke and steam that again the whole scene is blotted out by rising vapor, and the stage seems to be sinking. The orchestra shares the general descent, and soon informs us by a clatter of forges, and the groaning of slaves, that we are in some sort of subterranean sweat-shop. Presently the mists clear a bit, and we see our old friend Alberich teasing his little brother Mime, and eliciting from the tortured one squeaks and squeals of pain and terror. Mime is smaller than Alberich, and if possible, more fantastically hideous. He is very unpleasantly hairy, thin, dirty, his voice is shrill, his back bent, but there is a whimsical pathos about him which enlists our sympathies in spite of ourselves, whenever he appears. Evidently he has just finished making something which he likes too well to give up, but which his more powerful brother finally wrests from him. It is the *Tarnhelm*, a linked metal cap which renders the wearer invisible or allows him to assume what form he chooses. Alberich puts it on and straightway vanishes, although his whip, brandished by his invisible hand, stings Mime cruelly. The orchestra lashes with him, and cries with Mime. Then, drunk with power, Alberich goes off to other forges, whence moans of dwarfish terror can soon be heard.

Now suddenly we hear two familiar themes and Loge enters with Wotan. Mime is glad to tell them his troubles, and they learn of the power of the *Ring*, and the protective properties of the *Helm*. Their task is not going to be so easy! With interest they watch the procession of wizened little men piling up ingots under Alberich's brutal insistence. When at last he turns and sees the strangers, he is furious, and blames their intrusion on Mime, whom he sends off with a cut of the whip among the other unfortunates.

He is a little nervous when he recognizes his guests, but he is also a trifle light-headed with his new power, and like all *nouveaux riches*, begins to boast. Just to show what he can do, he turns himself into a huge and nasty snake, which slithers and writhes across the stage, while the orchestra reproduces its heavy muscular undulations. Loge pretends to be much frightened, and Alberich, coming back in his right shape, is complacent and flattered. He can show them other wonders if they care to see!

"I don't doubt that you can, my good fellow!" agrees Loge; then adds craftily, "It is more difficult to decrease one's size than increase it. I doubt if you can do *that*!"

Alberich falls promptly into the trap.

"Just watch me!" he cries exuberantly, and goes off to return in the form of a little toad. This creature is too small for even our binoculars to perceive, but the orchestra brings it distinctly to our ears in a series of unmistakable hops. Instantly Wotan puts his large foot upon the thing, and Alberich is in their power. Struggling and screaming, he is promptly bound, gagged and dragged to the upper world. Thus Brains triumphs over the ignorance of Brute Force.

The orchestra now leads us through more mists and allows us to think over what we have seen thus far, with gentle musical promptings, then informs us, by reviewing some of the themes of the second scene, that we are about to arrive again among the Gods and their problems at the foot of Walhalla.

Loge and Wotan issue from their rock dragging their wretched captive, and the spiteful Fire-God leaps and pirouettes about the prone and miserable Dwarf in tantalizing mockery. When he demands hoarsely to know the price of his freedom, they tell him brutally that they will take his entire hoard, and that what is more, he had best produce it quickly. Very naturally he makes violent objection, but what can the poor fellow do? After extreme agitation in his spirit and among the instruments, his bonds are unfastened from one hand and, by means of the Ring upon his finger, he is allowed to summon his flock of wizened workers, who, piece by piece, pile up in a golden heap all his cherished riches. Even the *Tarnhelm* is required of him, and as the last straw, Wotan insists upon the Ring. The orchestra utters the *Ring Motif* in scandalized tones, but Alberich has to yield in the end, and contents himself with a good round curse upon the Ring and all the wearers thereof. Here we notice a new theme, the *Curse*, which will become very familiar to us as the drama proceeds. Alberich scuttles down his hole, and Loge laughs and

dances with triumph, while Wotan gazes with fixed and gloating eye upon his new bauble, attractive in spite of its recent sinister endowment.

Now we hear the Giants stamping in, and Freia, with her flowery theme. All the other deities rush on to hear the news. They are still looking haggard, and there are mists around Walhalla. It is high time something was done.

The Giants have enjoyed their little visit from Freia, and are already a trifle sorry not to keep her, but the sight of all the beautiful gold is compensating. If there is enough to hide her from their eyes, they will be satisfied. They ram their trees into the ground beside her and begin to pile up the treasure. At last she seems completely hidden, only a chink remains, and the *Tarnhelm* fills that. Are they content? The amorous Fasolt, however, can still see a gleam of the maiden's eye. There is a hole just the size of the Ring. But Wotan will not give it up, he has never had anything that he liked so much; besides, he intends eventually, so Loge says, to restore it to the Rhine Daughters. Wotan at least is honest. No, he wants it for himself!

Suddenly everything grows dark, and from the earth gleams a spot of blue and frosty light which eventually reveals the veiled head and shoulders of an old woman, Erda, the Earth-mother and Wotan's first wife, who remains conveniently asleep except at critical moments like this when she rouses to utter a little wise and much-needed advice. Now she talks slowly and impressively for a while, the burden of her words being a solemn warning to Wotan to have nothing whatever to do with this Ring. She knows things, even if she sleeps in the earth: she has three wise daughters, the Norns, who read the Past, the Present, and the Future, and the verdict is—give up the Ring! After a final gasp of the impressive alliteration which Wagner so loves, she disappears and Wotan grudgingly obeys. The Ring joins the other treasure, and Freia, freed, runs joyfully to him and to the motherly embraces of Fricka. Immediately the bloom seems to come back to the faces of all her relations, and there is general rejoicing. But the Giants, having got what they wanted, begin after the manner of brutes, to quarrel over it. They cannot seem to divide it evenly and appeal to Loge—Brains—to decide for them. He suggests that one take the Ring and the other all the rest; but Fafner has just thought of something much better. He pulls up his little pine tree and with it promptly brains his brother Fasolt, then takes all the treasure for himself, and drags it away, well-pleased.

The Gods are all perfectly horrified at the crime, and realize

that it is probably the first manifestation of the *Curse of the Ring*. They shudder and consider themselves well rid of it, but Wotan wonders if its possession for only a little while will have contaminated him. He thinks he had better go and consult Erda again. Fricka, however, has heard quite enough of this lady; it is about time he paid some attention to her. With smiles and blandishments she tries to interest him in the new house. It would be nice to go and have breakfast there after such an eventful morning.

So Donner is ordered to clear up the hanging mists about the ramparts, and mounting a little eminence, this handsome young man calls his obedient storm-clouds around him, swings his great hammer in tune to a perfectly delightful and aptly descriptive swing in the orchestra, and the thunders roll and the lightnings flash magnificently. Then Froh, the happy, sunny brother, adds his contribution, and as the clouds roll back, a lovely shimmering rainbow bridge is seen to arch right up to Walhalla's gate. The music is a *Rainbow* too—nothing else—for a moment, then the mighty *Walhalla* rolls out with impressive repetition. Hand in hand, the naively happy Gods start to mount the pretty structure, when suddenly Wotan stops. He has a thought. As the Gods seem unable to keep out of such messes as he has just been through, why not create a finer race to walk the earth, a race of Heroes that shall, by deeds of pure valor, redeem creation? The *Sword*, as typical of such a race, now sounds for the first time in the orchestra, and Wotan, for fear we may not get his meaning, draws and brandishes his own weapon.

Once more the family march to Walhalla is resumed, but half-way across is interrupted by some familiar strains chanted by women's voices somewhere out of sight.

"The Nixies in the Rhine!" explains Loge. "They want their Ring!"

But Wotan is annoyed, he has had enough trouble for one day and wishes they would keep quiet. Loge shrugs his shoulders and calls down to them ironically.

"Lacking gold, bask in the light of the Gods' splendor!"

But they keep on wailing, and the curtain falls, just as we are wondering how strong that rainbow really is.



DIE WALKÜRE

Several things are supposed to have happened between the close of *Rheingold* and the opening of this, the first opera of the Trilogy. In the first place Wotan, feeling decidedly uncomfortable about his weakness in not returning the Ring to the Rhine Daughters, has not only this moral worry, but also a very material one. The Giant Fafner has the Ring, consequently there is no limit to the power which he may command, a power which is capable of rising against and destroying the Gods themselves. Fortunately, for the moment he does not realize his own possibilities, and has stupidly turned himself into a horrible dragon and retired to a cave in the forest to guard his treasure, where of course all his riches are not doing him nor any one else any good, and he is leading the wretched, isolated, hated existence of every miser. If, however, some fine day, a ray of intelligence should penetrate his gloom, then let Walhalla look to its might! Against this very contingency Wotan has begun to lay far-reaching plans. He has looked up his first wife, Erda, again, roused her from her slumbers and kept her exceedingly busy bearing him nine love-children or Wish-maidens, as he calls them: magnificent, untrammelled creatures who dress like warriors, ride air-horses, and skim above the battle-fields of the world, gathering up the fallen heroes and bearing them off to Walhalla where they become an invincible bodyguard for Wotan. These picturesque ladies are technically known as Valkyrs, and chief among them is Brünnhilde, the darling and heart's favorite of her father. But of her more anon.

Not only has Wotan begotten these nine, but he has thought it wise to philander a bit upon the earth and take a mortal woman to wife! This for the sole purpose of establishing a race of super-heroes, one of whom shall eventually restore, through his own initiative, the famous Ring to its original owners. The children born of this slightly irregular proceeding were twins, a boy and girl, who knew their father as Wälse, and called themselves by the family name of Wälsung. Wälse was a rough creature, rather resembling a wolf, from all accounts, and doubtless the family life was primitive in the extreme. One sad day the boy, home from a hunt with his father, found their hut burned, their mother killed, and the sister abducted. Later on, Wälse mysteriously disappeared, leaving only an empty wolfskin behind him. The boy, as sole survivor, is the young hopeful of the entire plot, and on his shoulders rests the promotion of Wotan's ingenious plannings. You may

wonder why Wotan did not, as the All-Powerful, go directly after the Ring and return it without further complications, but if he had there would be no libretto for the operas. Besides, he is a God, and cannot retract a word or an action without losing prestige. So he cannot work in the open.

Now that you are in possession of the above facts, you are equipped to enjoy with some intelligence the second, and in some ways, the most appealing of the *Ring* operas. All this same information will be disclosed in the course of the first and second acts, Siegmund and Sieglinde repeating as much of it as they know to each other several times and at length, and later Wotan filling in the gaps, in his conversations with Fricka and Brünnhilde. But if you want to keep a clear and open mind assimilate it now.

Just before the curtain rises the orchestra contributes a most convincing tone-picture of a raging storm. The rain patters in big drops on the strings, the wind howls and whistles, trees shiver and toss their tortured branches, and the thunder rolls to the remembered hammer strokes of Donner, while the lightning flashes in a racing flight of instrumental shrieks. The fury a little spent, but by no means over, the curtain rises.

We see the interior of a primeval dwelling. "Hut," says the program, but it is a sizeable one, though rough and barren of any modern convenience. Right through the center grows an enormous tree-trunk, and it is presumed that the leafy branches outside supplement the rather casual timbers of the roof. At one side is a hearth, behind it a sort of cupboard. Across, on the left is a short flight of steps leading to another room, and at the rear are enormous battened doors which at this moment are pushed open to admit on the breath of the storm a blond young man wearing a garment of fur and rags and little else. He would be strikingly handsome were it not for his drenched and exhausted appearance. He staggers into the room, totters forward with what is evidently the last of his strength, crawls to the hearth and sinks unconscious upon a convenient bearskin. The music is as weary and spent, as hopeless and numb as he. It croons suggestively over his prone form for a moment, then changes to inquiry as the little door on the left opens, and Sieglinde, thinking she heard her lord returning, comes dutifully to greet him.

But what is this? A strange man! She crosses quickly the enormous room and bends over to examine this unexpected visitor. As she observes his wayworn condition, she is moved to quick

compassion, and her emotion is caught up and presented to our ears exactly as her hovering figure and lovely look of deep concern convince our eyes. The man gazes at her dully. "Water!" he gasps, and she rises, takes a horn from the table and goes out. In a moment she returns, gives him the horn, and watches him fascinated, while he drinks. *Compassion*—womanly compassion! insists the orchestra. When he has revived a little, he too finds his eyes fixed in wonder. He has never seen such a woman, never felt so strangely. What can be this strange suffocation in his heart? The orchestra knows. It is Love! Prompted by this feeling, the man springs up to go. He is such an unlucky person that he must not endanger her peace by remaining. But she implores him to linger. Her own luck is not so good that she need fear.

Then they suddenly, breathless and palpitant, want to know all about each other. She is the wife of Hunding, and this is his house. He is an unpleasant man, it was a forced marriage, and things for her are pretty hopeless . . . the stranger is unarmed, let him beware! The stranger seems to have a number of names which he has found unsuitable, but for the moment he will call himself *Wehwalt*, and he will fearlessly await Hunding. Sieglinde now brings some mead in her horn, and this plus another long and stimulating exchange of glances seems to revive him completely. He declares that if his weapons had only been as strong as his arms, he would never have had to fly from his enemies to-day.

Suddenly a sinister, cruel, gruff phrase possesses the orchestra horns, faintly at first, then with increasing blare. Sieglinde startled, trembling, although well she knows who it is, goes to the door just in time to admit her stern and black-browed lord. Dutifully she divests him of spear and shield and places them against the tree with the same solicitude which you might, in wifely devotion, bestow upon your husband's overcoat as you hang it on the rack. Hunding ignores these customary attentions, and points in pardonable resentment at the young gentleman standing so securely upon his sacred hearth-rug. Sieglinde explains in a voice which tries to be casual, that she found him exhausted, a refugee from the storm. Then she goes about her domestic duties and prepares supper—evidently a cold meal to-night, for the bread and pasties are standing ready in the cupboard.

Hunding, for a cave-man, is amazingly conventional. Although he does not like this stranger's looks nor his more-than-haunting resemblance to his wife, he would not think of violating the laws of hospitality, especially to a weaponless man. Therefore, food

and shelter for the night, but in the morning . . . fight to the finish!

Supper being announced, they all adjourn to the flat stump which serves for a table. There are horns of mead for every one and dubious viands, but the food interests them little. Hund-ing is intent upon finding out all he can about his guest, and questions him gruffly. The stranger is communicative. *Friedmund* and *Frohwalt* are names which he might like to have but must not, only *Wehwalt* is applicable for to-night. As to his history—here he retails something of those facts we rehearsed at the opening of the chapter. Sieglinde, breathless, ignoring her food, and hanging on his every word, wonders where Wälse, the father, is now. Quietly the orchestra answers her with the majestic strains of *Walhall*. She closes her eyes a moment as if recalling something from her inner consciousness, then leans forward to hear more. The Stranger goes on . . . all about the bad luck which has pursued him, even to-day when he went to rescue a maiden in distress and was fallen upon in treachery by her kinsmen.

Hunding pricks up his ears at that. He was one of the reënforcements in that very fight and besides, he has heard of the Wälsungs before, and owes them an ancient grudge. He will go to bed at once to make the night seem shorter, and in the morning the conventions will be satisfied, and he will gloriously and shortly dispose of his weaponless guest-foe. He orders his wife peremptorily off to bed, as soon as she shall have mixed him a night-cap. This she does with lingering and meaningful gesture, and humbly precedes her man to the door of their chamber. Hunding retires in full panoply of war, prudently taking spear and shield, but before Sieglinde goes she turns for a moment, catches the stranger's eye, lifts the horn she carries in the general direction of the big tree trunk. Immediately the orchestra utters a phrase which we learned at the moment Wotan paused lost in thought upon the rainbow bridge of *Rheingold*. *The Sword!*

The Hundings swiftly pass through the door and our hero is left alone among the dark shadows, for the hearth-fire is almost out. Before he settles himself for sleep, he broods a little. His father Wälse once promised him a sword in his hour of extreme need. Why should not this be that hour? As if in answer to his thought, a falling ember lights up the room and shines upon some metal thing in the trunk of the tree. At the same time the orchestra cries, "*Sword! Sword!*" That ember dies and another flares up. The young man gets up to look closer at this object, but is surprised and delighted at that moment to see Sieglinde come

quietly through the door, radiant and lovely, all in white, having removed her little fur garment for the night. She comes directly to him and tells him in eager whispers that she drugged Hunding's posset, and that he is now dead to the world for many hours. She thinks her interesting and unfortunate guest should hear a story which she can unfold. It appears that at the time of her hateful marriage to Hunding, just when the festivities were at their height, an old man, a Wanderer with one eye, wearing a blue cloak and a broad-brimmed hat, came suddenly into the house. Every one seemed terrified at him but herself. For some reason she seemed strangely attracted to him. (Listen to the orchestra explaining why. *Walhalla!* It was Wotan, you see!) Well, this astonishing person strode in, drove a mighty sword into the tree-trunk with one blow straight to the hilt, announced that it should be the prize of whoever could draw it out, and departed forthwith. Of course every one at once tried his strength, and although most of them were big, strong men, they all, to her great delight, failed. No one has ever been able to budge it, but she has a strange premonition that this, her unarmed guest, may be the man. Touched by her solicitude, and his imagination fired by her story, the stranger now gives free rein to the emotion which has almost suffocated him ever since he first saw this lady. Springing forward, he clasps her in an embrace which she ardently returns.

Suddenly, as though caused by the breath of their passion, the big doors at the back blow open, and one sees that the storm has passed, and that it is a heavenly night of spring, the moonlight flooding the deep forest with unearthly beauty. The harps murmur ravishingly, and Sieglinde, startled, cries, "Who went forth?" "No one!" replies her lover. "But one came in. Spring and Love are here!"

So saying, he leads her to a comfortable seat by the hearth, and with his arms around her, he sings the famous and unutterably lovely *Spring Song*. A new note played on old keys, through which is woven a garland of the beautiful phrases we are already recognizing with ease and pleasure. Sieglinde replies to his raptures in much the same vein. Partly through instinct, partly through their various reminiscences, they now know who they are. None other than that ill-fated pair, the twin children of Wälse, who, of course, was also the Wanderer who bestowed the sword. Exuberant with delight at the unconventional thought that their love can now perpetuate, unpolluted, the race of the Wälsungs, they sing and embrace ecstatically. Now all the young man needs

is a suitable name, and a weapon. For the first, Sieglinde discards all those which have been suggested, and offers *Siegmund*, which he eagerly accepts as the right one at last. Exultant, he leaps upon the table and grasps the sword hilt, sings to it a little too long to suit our impatience for action, and finally, to the perfect, complete and victorious motif of *The Sword*, fairly shouted by the orchestra, draws out the blade. Calling it *Nothing* or *Needful*, he brandishes it delightedly, leaps down and embraces Sieglinde, who has been uttering her own jubilant and triumphant comment on his prowess. (What a sleeper is Hunding!) and together they run happily out into the moonlit forest, as the curtain falls.

The orchestral prelude to the next act is one of the greatest excitement and expectancy. We can scarcely wait for the curtain to go up, so much of brilliancy and glamour does it promise us. There is a passing hint in it of previous musical acquaintances, prominent among them a hurried repetition of *The Sword*, but the main part is taken up with two new and closely related themes, the *Valkyr's Shout*, and the *Valkyr's Ride*. This latter is unmistakable in its insistence upon the scampering hoof-beats of the air-horses. At last the curtain does go up, and nothing we could have imagined can equal the appeal of what we see. It is a wild rocky height, with needles of still higher peaks piercing the sky. Here stands Wotan in all the panoply of his splendor, red-cloaked, with gleaming coat of mail, and the eagle's wings of his helmet full spread. As he waves his graven spear he alone is a spirited picture—but look there—on a crag above him! There is Brünnhilde, the most stimulating and glorious, the noblest personality known to legend. She is young, vital, and kindling. She too wears a breast-plate of linked mail, but her cloak is the color of the clouds through which she rides, and her helmet bears the wings of the white hawk. A wreath of green oak-leaves softens the line of steel on her brow, and her hair, windblown and tangled, streams in an auburn mass over her cloak. Her skirts are looped and caught up in her girdle, to be out of her way when astride Grane, her horse, and her straight young limbs are sandaled and strapped. Such is the ideal picture of Brünnhilde, as she leans upon her spear and shining shield and listens to her Father's instructions, but unfortunately all *prime donne* do not so portray her. Too often is the young, irrepressible Wish-maiden hampered by a silver corset, a long white train, and high heels.

Wotan is describing to her the plight of the Wälsungs who are

at this moment in extremity as they fly blindly from Hunding's swift and vengeful pursuit. When they meet in combat, she, Brünnhilde, shall see to it that Siegmund is victor.

The Valkyr answers with a shout. "*Ho-vo-to-ho! Heieha!*" she calls, and laughs with the joy of living as she waves her spear exuberantly. In life's supreme moments what would we not give to be able to utter just such a shout! And most of us are dumb! Suddenly Brünnhilde looks over the edge of her rock and sees her stepmother Fricka approaching in her ram-drawn chariot. The Valkyr regards this estimable lady as somewhat of a joke, and mischievously wishing her parent well of a scene she feels sure is now in store for him, she utters one more laughing cry and springs out of sight.

Fricka is indeed in a rage. As representative of all the conventions of family life, she feels thoroughly outraged at the scandalous behavior of these Wälsung twins. They have calmly broken every moral law, and she, Fricka, will not stand for it. The truth is that she does not care much for them anyway . . . who could blame her? . . . the shameless fruits of her husband's philandering. As for that Valkyr brood, they are a constant torment to her. Brünnhilde's cry, sounding faintly from the heights, goads her to fury. She is determined that Hunding shall not have appealed to her in vain, and that the violation of his hearth shall be avenged.

Poor Wotan is sadly perplexed. The Wälsungs are his special pets and he has staked everything on the results of this union, and yet there is something in what Fricka says. She is indisputably right when she declares that the position of the Gods is none too secure, and that they cannot afford to be lax in their discipline. He refuses, however, to recall the sword which he gave, and only agrees not to shelter the guilty pair.

"Very well," says Fricka. "But neither must the Valkyr!"

"She is a free agent and must do as she wishes!" hedges Wotan in distress.

"Free agent, nonsense!" repudiates Fricka. "She is your incarnate will, you have said so often enough!"

In the end he capitulates, just as he knew he must from the beginning. Brünnhilde, swinging gayly around a rock, stops suddenly, her song dying in her throat, as she perceives Fricka's triumphant progress toward her chariot. The two women glare at each other.

"Your father has a message for you, my dear!" says Fricka with complacency, as she retires in superb hauteur. Brünnhilde, not to be outdone, descends from her rock with glacial dignity.

Arriving upon the stage level, she looks over at Wotan, and sees him sitting plunged in gloom. With an impulsive gesture she flings down spear and shield, tosses off her helmet, and runs to kneel at his side like the loving little girl she must have been not so long ago. All this time a fine web of many familiar phrases has been spun in the orchestra. *Walhalla, The Giants* and their *Contract*, the *Apples, Loge, The Ring*, and its *Curse*, these have sought to interpret for us Wotan's thoughts.

Now ensues one of the most touching of all scenes. Wotan the father, running his hand through the rough locks of his favorite child, tells her things which he can share with no other being, for she is very nearly and perfectly himself. She knows without being told, the emotions and desires of his heart. She does not, however, know as many facts about the plot of the opera as you do, having read the preface to this chapter. Therefore at some length he tells her the story of the Ring and its theft and his far-reaching plans for restitution. She is utterly in sympathy, and when he must at last tell her of Fricka's decree, she starts back indignantly. Why, of all people in creation, should she please her stepmother? Wotan looks at her in amazement. Is this his dear Wish-daughter questioning his orders? Outrageous! He storms and blusters and scolds, trying to mask the fact that she is really running true to form and insisting on the very thing he inwardly desires. However, he must be obeyed, and rising in his wrath, stalks angrily away to the tune of a motif which vigorously expresses his rage.

Brünnhilde, bewildered and saddened, goes slowly over and picks up her fallen weapons. The orchestra plays a little hesitatingly and slowly with the beat of her horse's hoofs, as if it were now the confused beat of her reluctant heart. Suddenly the music becomes excited and a trifle wild. A phrase we have almost unconsciously associated with *Flight* dominates the orchestra, and down a rocky path at the right comes slipping and sliding and staggering a pale, distraught and panicky Sieglinde followed by her anxious lover. Brünnhilde hastily retires into the cave where she has stabled her horse, and the frantic pair rush across the stage. At the extreme left poor Sieglinde drops from sheer exhaustion, and Siegmund pillows her with some difficulty upon his knee. They have been furiously pursued all day by the avenging husband, even now his horn can be heard. They can go no further. What is to be done? The stage has grown rather dark in the last few moments and now Siegmund looks up to see a sudden radiance shining upon an unearthly figure just emerging from the cave opposite him. It is Brünnhilde, but how changed in the

nobility and dignity she has assumed to pronounce the *Death Sentence!* She stands very still, and beautiful, and fearsome in her shining armor, and leans a little wearily upon her spear. "Sieg-mund!" she calls. "Look at me. It is I whom you soon must follow!"

"Who are you, and why do you stare at me so earnestly?" queries the distressed young man.

So in accents gentle but firm, the Valkyr tells him she has come from the All-Father to summon him to Walhalla where he will join the happy band of Heroes. A marvelous life, among Gods and Goddesses, and Wish-maidens . . . even his father will be there, says she alluringly.

"But Sieglinde, will she be there, too?" He looks down tenderly at his pale burden. Brünnhilde sadly shakes her head.

"Then," cries Siegmund with spirit, "give my regards to Wotan, to Wälsa, to all the Heroes and Wish-maidens. I prefer to stay here!"

It is soon explained to him, however, that he has no choice in the matter, perceiving which he immediately decides to solve the problem in another way and lifts *Nothung* to kill Sieglinde, then himself. This noble impulse is too much for Brünnhilde, who has been visibly weakening for some time. Impulsively she rushes over to him, abandoning her remote and godlike reserve. She will fight on his side, no matter what the unhappy results for herself. Although disobedient, she knows that she will be performing Wotan's innermost will. With a rallying cry she dashes up the crags to the battleground even as Hunding winds his horn just around the corner. It is now very dark. Siegmund, a little dazed, tenderly lays his sister-wife upon the ground and springs after the Valkyr through the gathering mists.

Sieglinde dreams an audible nightmare, evidently reliving her rape by Hunding. She awakens screaming for "Sieg-mund" and finds him gone. There is a flash of lightning and above her on the rocks she sees her two husbands in mortal combat, but standing beside Siegmund protecting him is a glorious creature with white-winged helmet. Her shield receives Hunding's sword, but as the Wälsung lunges with *Nothung*, there is a sudden red glare and Wotan interposes his spear, which breaks the magic sword in two, and Hunding's stroke goes home. With a shriek Sieglinde faints, but Brünnhilde, vanquished and thoroughly frightened, has kept her wits about her. Hurrying through the murky darkness, she catches up her sister's limp form and dashes off to the comparative safety of Grane's back, as the curtain, on a delirious

flood of *Wotan's Anger, The Sword, Flight, Love, and Compassion*, quickly falls.

As a prelude to the last act we have the magnificent and oft-quoted *Ride of the Valkyrs*, embroidered and elaborated at length and with exhilarating verve and dash. The music pictures the adventurous Wish-maidens hurtling through the sky on their winged horses, snatching up their chosen warriors and madly dashing for home above the noise of battle. When the curtain rises it reveals their rallying ground, and at the right their high observation rock. Several have already arrived, others keep coming up in twos and threes. They sing and shout in choral imitation of Brünnhilde's *Ho-ya-to-ho*, question each other about the exploits of the day, and wonder where their leader can be. At last she arrives, but this is no dead warrior across her saddle bow, but a pale and lovely woman. She comes hurrying in, with her supporting arm about Sieglinde, and breathlessly blurts out her plight to her sisters. But if she expected sympathy and help from her family, she is disillusioned, for they are very loath indeed to share the paternal disfavor which she has earned. Sieglinde, rousing herself a little, is more humane, and begs her new friend not to make any sacrifice for her, she would really like to die now that Siegmund has been killed. Brünnhilde, however, has some startling news for her which will make her feel quite differently. To a broad and inspiring phrase, which from now on will enjoy great prominence in the operas, she tells Sieglinde that she has one great incentive to live, for already she has conceived the infant Siegfried, who shall be the greatest of the Heroes. Sieglinde is ecstatic, and listens eagerly to the Valkyr's hasty directions as to her flight and ultimate refuge in the forest, where Wotan rarely strays because of Fafner's lair.

The orchestra blares forth the splendid *Siegfried Hero* motif exultantly, Brünnhilde places in Sieglinde's hands the broken fragments of *Nothung*, and in a moment we have seen the last of this gentle, pitiful, appealing human woman, who has had perhaps the most beautiful music of the score to sing.

The Valkyr on the lookout has warned of a small tornado coming this way and now she and the orchestra discover that it is Wotan, approaching tempestuously, beside himself with rage. His anger thunders on the horns and he comes on singing, "Where is Brünnhilde? Where is she?" in threatening tones. The frightened Wish-maidens make a futile attempt to hide her, then all scatter like leaves before the wind of his wrath. Very meekly she

approaches him. She is bareheaded and weaponless and very contrite and sweet. Abjectly she begs forgiveness, pleading that she but carried out his secret will. He storms and rages, then changes the tenor of his complaint and depicts his sorrow and disappointment that she could have failed him. There is nothing to be done but to deprive her of her privileges. No more mad galloping through the clouds on his errands, no more sweet communion with him about his problems. Her offense has warranted death, but he cannot exterminate a Goddess, he can but exile her, deprive her of her Godhead, make of her a mortal woman.

Brünnhilde pleads despairingly. The sentence is too terrible, too stupendous! But it is inexorable, it is Fate! Meekly at last she bows her head and throws herself sobbing in her father's yearning arms, pleading only that he will devise some means of safeguarding her so that only the noblest Hero shall have the power to approach her. So Wotan, the All-Father, sings his great *Farewell* to his heart's child—one of the noblest conceptions in all musical composition. In fact this entire scene, in the hands of competent artists, will leave few dry eyes in the house, remote and legendary as the situation may seem. At last, wholly yielding, she sinks half lifeless in his arms, and he carries her tenderly to a rock beneath a great pine-tree. Gently he arranges with his clumsy man-hands her cloak and tunic. Reverently, lovingly, he places her helmet on her head and turns down the white wings over her lovely face. Her spear he puts in her hand, her shield upon her breast. One last, lingering look, and with a wrench he turns from her and calls frantically for Loge.

That ingenious person is never far away from his master. With a flickering and a crackling in the orchestra we know he has heard the summons, although we do not see his actual presence. Wotan explains that he wishes a circle of magic fire to perpetually surround the rock on which Brünnhilde shall sleep, until such time as a Hero intrepid enough to venture through the flames shall discover that they are but make-believe and pass safely through to awaken her. Loge responds by an immediate glow and rising festoons of dancing sparks. His rushing motif increases in force and substance and finally resolves into the matchless *Magic Fire Music*, that *pièce de résistance* of every Symphony Orchestra in the world. Brünnhilde now has entered into her long, deep sleep, the fire circle is complete, the whole wide horizon glows with the rosy light. Wotan, a dark sinister figure, shows for a moment silhouetted in lonely majesty against the sky, then sorrowfully starts for home as the curtain falls.

SIEGFRIED

This is Wagner's own favorite of the *Ring* operas. Whether or not you share his opinion will depend upon how strong an appeal its lighter, more youthful, exuberant note makes to your taste after the mighty and doomful majesty of *Die Walküre*. Again, it is something to have to wait until the last eighteen minutes of a long opera for our first glimpse of a female member of the cast; an inducement to some, a deterrent to others, depending much upon the endowments of the Brünnhilde. Be all this as it may, the opera *Siegfried* stands alone in the Hall of Fame as the epitome of Youth, elementary, ruthless, progressive, and without fear. It is the glorification of untrammelled Nature. And because Laughter is the rightful heritage of the young, the composer does not hesitate to introduce a touch of comedy here and there in this chapter of his great and solemn epic.

The overture seems made of growls and complaints. A remembrance of *Wotan's Rage*, and a foreshadowing of *Fafner's* indignation, with an allusion to the *Nibelungen* and their *Forges*, their *Bondage*, and their *Toil* make up its substance.

The curtain rises on the interior of a vast and roomy cave converted into a combination dwelling and smithy. Through the opening at the rear we catch a glimpse of the forest in full summer leaf. This is Mime's home and workshop, and we see him toiling at his forge over the difficult welding of a sword which shall be strong enough to withstand the rough usage his adopted child Siegfried will put it to. This boy is the son of Sieglinde, who died at his birth, and who, let us hope, was allowed to join her dear Siegmund in Walhalla. Mime, scouting through the forest one day, found the helpless infant and has carefully reared him into a strong, lusty, vigorous youth. But he was not animated by any humanitarian motives, this crafty old Dwarf. The fact is that ever since his brother Alberich lost the Rhine Treasure, of which Fafner eventually became possessed, Mime has been obsessed by but one idea, to get that gold for himself. To this end he has raised up a foster son strong enough to fight and conquer the present owner, little dreaming that he is actually furthering the plans of Wotan, his hated overlord.

As he sings and squeaks and mumbles in dwarfish irritation at his task, a run of boisterous notes upon a forest horn announces Siegfried himself, who arrives leading a large black bear. Mime,

completely terrified, scuttles to a place of safety, and begs the boy to drive away his hateful pet. Siegfried, however, extracts the full measure of enjoyment from the Dwarf's agony before he finally unleashes the mild-mannered beast and lets him go. Siegfried is a personable youth, with a strong family resemblance to the blond race of Wälsung. He wears the fur tunic of the conventional caveman, and over his shoulder is hung a silver horn. His upbringing, however, has been shocking. He has no respect for god or man, acknowledges no authority, admits no restraint. His manners are dreadful, his insolence outrageous. Immediately he begins to tease for a new sword, and when the Dwarf hands him his latest and most painstaking effort, he lifts it and shatters it with one blow, roaring with laughter at the creature's discomfort, and then throwing himself down in intense irritation at not being able to get what he wants.

Mime, squeaking and protesting, tries to instill into the boy some sense of gratitude for his care and kindness through the years, but Siegfried's clear eyes penetrate beneath his subterfuge, although he does not know why he so loathes this uncouth little deformity who has fathered him. Siegfried has no books nor sophisticated little playmates to enlighten him upon natural history, but he has made his own observations among the denizens of the forest, and he knows that all creatures have a mother and a father, and that they are apt to resemble their parents. His own radiant image reflected in a pool suggests the wizened, hairy little gnome not at all, and Mime's tale of being both father and mother does not sound plausible. He would like to kill him and have done with it, thus ridding the world of an unpleasant personality, but remembers that he would thus exterminate his only source of information about himself.

Seizing the hairy, shrunken throat of his foster parent, he shakes him as a puppy would a rabbit and demands the truth about his origin. Mime, trembling with fear and fussily conciliatory, then reviews, together with the orchestra, the tale of Sieglinde's death and his own rescue. Siegfried is more moved than he cares to admit, but Mime is such a liar, he won't believe a word until he is shown some proof. Nothing easier! *The Sword*, suggests the music, and Mime scuttles to a chest and produces the broken pieces of *Nothung*. "Well," says Siegfried, "if you had something like this in the house all the time, why didn't you mend it and make me a really decent sword?" Mime has to acknowledge that he has tried and failed. "Well, try again, and see that it is ready to-night or I'll wring your neck!" is Siegfried's filial re-

joinder. The boy is on fire to be off into the world to seek his fortune, now that his parentage is satisfactorily established. He goes jubilantly out into the forest to tell his dumb friends the news.

Mime, left alone, is quite crushed. If the boy leaves him, with him goes all hope of slaying the dragon and gaining the Ring. And worst of all, what on earth is he going to do about this sword! Groaning and blubbing, he sinks upon a stool before his forge, plunged in gloom.

Now there is a certain pompous, impressive, stately announcement in the orchestra, and in walks Wotan, dressed very much as Sieglinde saw him at her unhappy marriage to Hunding. He wears the costume in which he always visits the haunts of men—a blue cloak, and a wide-brimmed hat which covers the socket of his missing eye. His only recognizable property is his rune-carved spear which he uses as a staff. Mime springs up resentful of the intrusion and invites him to go about his business, but Wotan the Wanderer calmly seats himself, declaring that he is really a desirable guest, for he knows a great many secrets, and just to establish good feeling will consent to answer any three questions which the Dwarf shall put to him, on penalty of his head. Mime is intrigued. He more than suspects the identity of his guest, and foolishly thinks that this may be one way of getting rid of him. So he agrees, and sitting down, scratches his head in deep thought. This would be a marvelous opportunity to find out the one thing he wants so desperately to know—how to repair *Nothung*, but instead of grasping this chance to acquire information, he, like most mortals, prefers to show off his own superior knowledge. So he plays his end of the game with three silly riddles, so easy that we can answer them ourselves, especially as the orchestra does all it can to help. Who lives under the earth? The Dwarfs. Who lives on the earth? The Giants. And who lives above in the clouds? The Gods, of course, for the orchestra murmurs, "*Walhalla*." It is child's play for Wotan, who answers condescendingly, then claims that his turn has come. Mime grows a bit uneasy, for when Wotan spoke of the Gods and smote the earth with his spear, there was an unpleasant roll of majestic and tell-tale thunder. His suspicions as to his visitor's identity are confirmed; there is nothing to do but submit.

The first question he happens to know. What race does Wotan love and yet persecute? Mime can safely answer, "The Wälsungs!" and the orchestra confirms him with all its reminiscent enthusiasm. Question two is not so bad either. Wotan knows

that Mime is rearing Siegfried to kill Fafner; well then, with what weapon will he do the deed? "With *Nothung* . . ." hazards Mime, and the orchestra, more sure of itself, blares forth "*The Sword*."

Now for question number three. "In that case, how shall *Nothung* be mended?" The orchestra knows and sings lustily about the Young Siegfried, but Mime is tone-deaf and very scared. This is the exact question which bothers him day and night. Of course he should have been the one to ask it, and now he may never know and besides, his head is forfeit. Wotan, rising, shows clemency however for the moment, and tells Mime that only he who knows no fear can forge the sword and kill the dragon. "But," he adds casually, "he will also kill you!" With this upsetting announcement he turns and stalks majestically from the cave, his *Wanderer* motif preceding and surrounding him until he is gone. There is a sudden suggestion of Loge in the air, the orchestra hisses and steams and crackles, and poor Mime, in a terrible state of nerves, suffers from the hallucination of a fiery dragon invading his cave. Trembling in abject terror he crawls behind his anvil, just as Siegfried and his lusty motif come in at the door.

"Where is my sword?" he asks; then seeing the cringing Dwarf, he wants to know what is the matter with him. Mime, squirming up onto his feet, squeaks that he is studying fear, which lesson Siegfried himself ought to learn. "Fear? What is fear anyway?" asks the boy.

No, he has never trembled nor shivered when alone in the forest after dark. No, he has never felt the slightest emotion at any unpleasant sight. Even the roars and moans of the orchestra leave him unmoved. Well, then it is time he learned; Mime will take him to a certain cave where a most horrible dragon, Fafner, resides. Here Siegfried will surely learn his lesson. The boy, like all of his kind, is eager for every new sensation. If there is a thrill in this meeting with Fafner, then he is all for it, the sooner the better. As for the sword, he will forge it himself, even if the Dwarf makes fun of him.

Guided by instinct, Siegfried first files the two halves of *Nothung* into the crucible. The orchestra files with him. Then he heats this to molten steel and pours it in a mould. This he drops into the trough of water and the cloud of steam which rises is repeated upon the instruments. Mime, fearful and fascinated, now understands most perfectly the *Wanderer's* words and shivers and shakes for his own doom. Siegfried, lustily pulling the bellows up and

down, wants to know the name of the sword, and when he hears that it is *Nothung*—*Needful*—he shouts the word exultantly as he exercises his glorious young muscles. (While he has worked thus, the Dwarf has been busy among his pots and kettles. The boy notices him a moment, and he declares that, being outdone as a smith he must turn cook, but we know his concoction is an evil one and is intended to poison the young hero after he has brought home the gold.) Up rise the flames, the strong hammer-strokes fall on the swiftly tempering steel, and in all too short a time—for it has been an exhilarating scene—*Nothung* is forged again in all its beautiful strength.

Seizing the weapon triumphantly Siegfried cries, "Now I'll show you a sword that is a sword!" The orchestra repeats the only appropriate motif, and with one blow the boy severs the great anvil in two neat halves, while Mime looks on stunned. Flourishing *Nothung* above his head, Siegfried runs toward the forest and freedom, as the curtain falls.

ACT II. Fafner, the dragon, roars considerably as a prelude to this act, and the rising curtain shows us the small clearing in the forest before his den. It is dark, just before dawn, and a shadowy figure is lurking about in the bushes. On closer inspection we discover this to be Alberich, Mime's evil brother, who having lost his gold, can devise no more useful occupation than hovering about the spot where he knows it to be, although he is powerless to recover it. Suddenly a wind like an approaching storm is heard, and there is a swift flash of light, while the orchestra hints at the gallop of an Air-horse. It is not a Valkyr this time but Wotan the Wanderer, who has come, apparently to have a little altercation with Alberich, who, aided by the motif of *Walhalla*, has recognized him at once. So they argue out the old story all over again, doubtless for the benefit of late arrivals in the audience, and finally when they reach the subject of Siegfried, Alberich very disrespectfully taunts Wotan with using the *Walsung* as a cat's-paw. Wotan ignores his remarks and infers that in the boy and Mime, Alberich faces a very real danger himself.

"Suppose we wake up old Fafner and tell him of his approaching fate. It would be a kindness," suggests Alberich. "Perhaps he would rather buy himself off!"

So Wotan disturbs the slumbers of the unseen monster within, who snores and growls and grumbles in a deep bass voice through a megaphone, that he doesn't want to hear about any impertinent

little boys with swords, that he has the treasure and means to keep it, and to go away and let him sleep!

Wotan shrugs his shoulders and smiles at Alberich's disappointment. "What shall be, will be!" he declares philosophically, and walks off, adding as an afterthought: "Look out for Mime!"

It is now dawn, so Alberich thinks it expedient to hide, especially as he hears his brother and Siegfried approaching.

The boy is agog with excitement, but still skeptical of Mime's promises. If this Fear shouldn't be anything after all, he will leave Mime anyway. Mime believes in creating the proper atmosphere. Squatting down before the boy, he sketches, with the orchestra's aid, and with his weather eye upon the cave, a superb and horrible picture of the large serpent and his unpleasant habits. Siegfried is not at all interested in foaming jaws nor stinging tail, the important thing is the location of the heart, if any, so that he may plunge *Nothung* in deep. Mime and his croakings make him nervous, so he irritably bids him be off, and the Dwarf shambles away.

Siegfried, rolling comfortably over upon his back, listens with delight to the murmurs of the awakening forest. This heavenly symphony of shimmering sunbeams, rustling leaves, rippling brooks, fluttering of feathers and calling of sleepy bird voices is called "*Waldweben*" or *Web of Forest Sounds*, in the concert halls, and no more marvelous bit of interpretive orchestral tone-painting exists anywhere. Siegfried detects one rather excited bird saying something in loud tones above all the rest, and strains his ears to understand, but the language is strange to him. Perhaps if he imitates it, he can understand. Jumping up he cuts a reed growing nearby, and clumsily fashions it with his sword into a pipe. He blows it, with the squeakiest of amusing results. Impatiently he hacks off another inch to change its pitch, but with no better luck. His efforts are rewarded only with delighted smiles from the audience. Well, away with the old pipe, he has a horn that makes as fine a noise as any bird! So with a flourish he puts the instrument to his lips and sets all the echoes flying with his silvery jubilant theme, known as *Siegfried's Call*. After that he looks up triumphantly at the bird and blows a fine version of his own *Hero-motif* which Brünnhilde first mentioned away back in *Walküre*.

The bird may be impressed, but the horn has produced other results. With a groaning and a slimy growling upon the bass instruments, Fafner, to the great delight of all the young persons

in the audience, sticks his great, horny, nightmare head and neck from his cave and asks who has had the temerity to disturb his nap. He yawns with steaming jaws, even as he protests. Siegfried is entranced. Giving the sleepy serpent scarcely a moment to collect his wits, he grasps his trusty *Nothung* and leaps to battle. Poor Fafner, taken thus at a disadvantage, makes a few futile lunges with stiff-necked ferocity, and then with a terrible groan sinks into a papier-mâché heap on the point of Siegfried's thrust. Before he dies, however, the poor old giant wants to know who this doughty hero may be, but Siegfried himself scarcely knows; he will not have a name until the next act. "At any rate," sobs the kindly dying dragon, "I shouldn't advise you to bother with all this treasure, it only brings sorrow and death!" with which words of wisdom he expires with horrid noises.

Siegfried, with a victorious foot upon the creature's head, is nevertheless suffering a minor discomfort, a drop or two of the dragon's blood has fallen on his finger and burned it. Like all youngsters he pops it promptly into his mouth, then all at once the bird begins to sing a repetition of its previous message and he finds to his surprise that he can understand it perfectly. So can we, for this particular bird is a young lady standing in the wings with her score book open. But her message is of greatest interest. She tells Siegfried that although the gold and treasure can do him little good, there is a *Ring* and a *Helmet* in there somewhere which can be more than useful to him in his future enterprises. Siegfried thanks her and dashes in.

Now Mime, and Alberich, like vultures hovering above every battle-field, slide in from opposite directions. Mime is yet a little distrustful of even a dead dragon and gives it a wide berth. At the mouth of the cave they meet and begin to quarrel and dispute each other's right to the booty. In the midst of their altercation Siegfried emerges with his prizes, and they disappear, Mime to return in a moment flattering and fawning and obsequiously importunate. Siegfried regards him skeptically and once more the obliging bird sings out, "Beware of Mime!" Even now the sly old gnome is offering his dear foster son a drink to refresh him after his exertions. Siegfried hesitates, wishing to know what he is drinking, and Mime, impatient of the delay, is a little too eager in pushing the stuff under his nose. Siegfried, probably a little more unstrung than he realizes, gives way to a sudden burst of temper and plunges *Nothung* straight through the body of the Dwarf. The orchestra ennobles the deed with a fine ringing of the *Sword* motif, and Alberich's mocking laughter is heard. Sieg-

fried drags the body into the cave and spurns it with his foot. Then, tired by his efforts, he goes back to his mossy bank and again throws himself down full-length to listen to the forest music. Now he has had his great adventure, but he is still restless and unsatisfied. It is a sex complex, but he has no repressions; he recognizes it at once. Again he calls to the bird. He would, like all the other woods creatures, find himself a mate!—and a worthy one, at that.

“Nothing easier!” chirps the bird, pleasurably excited. Then to the accompaniment of the *Magic Fire*, and *Loge*, and *Brünnhilde’s Sleep*, with an occasional reference to Siegfried’s *Hero-motif*, she sings an alluring description of the fire-ringed rock upon which sleeps the most beautiful maiden in the world, just waiting to be awakened by such a hero as he, a mortal who knows not fear!

“That’s the woman for me!” cries Siegfried, without hesitation, and springing up, asks only to be guided to the spot without delay. The bird now makes its appearance, not in the person of the lady with the score, but a real little feathered fowl, fluttering with more or less difficulty across the stage on a wire, as the curtain falls.

Before the curtain rises on the last act, we are musically conducted to a spot we are sure is at least within sight of the haunts of the Gods, for we hear fragmentary recollections of the *Valkyrs*, *Fire*, and *Wotan’s Rage*, while thunder roars and lightning flashes. The parting curtains reveal a desolate spot presumably half-way up a mountain. It is very dark and dismal, and an atmosphere in which we feel almost anything may happen. But at first only the Wanderer appears. It must be very disturbing indeed to Fricka to have him spend as much time away from home as he seems to do in this opera, and now, what is more, he has come to have a talk with her rival, the wise old Erda. He sings a series of solemn incantations calculated to rouse her from her subterranean slumbers, and presently in a misty blue light we see her frosty, shimmering head and shoulders. But this time she has little advice for him, perhaps she is a trifle weary of serving as a prop to his weaknesses; at any rate, she suggests rather coolly that he ask the Norns, or Brünnhilde, what he wants to know. So he has to explain what he has done to their mutual and favorite daughter. Erda cannot approve such behavior and refuses to help him: he has made his bed, now let him lie in it—thus showing herself to be a woman at heart. She would like to go back to her dreams,

but Wotan holds her there just long enough to hear something he wishes to say. The fact is, he is heartily sick of trouble and intrigue, and if, as he thinks likely, the end of the Gods is at hand, he is really glad to abdicate in favor of a race which he hopes will run things a little better than he seems to have been able to do. This is all very easy to say, but we shall see later that he does not find it so amusing when it happens.

Erda sinks back into the earth with a sigh of relief, and a blare of all the familiar music which usually accompanies him announces Siegfried, who, preceded by the same awkward bird, arrives upon the scene. Just now he has lost track of his guide, and accosts the Wanderer for information. They talk together for a few moments, the boy not hesitating to tell all about himself, and then his grandfather, for such he is of course, resents a little the cocksureness of this stripling and says that naturally the bird has disappeared, chased off, doubtless, by the Ravens of Walhalla. This is an evil omen, and Siegfried shall be allowed to go no further.

"Oh, is that so!" exclaims the insolent youth, and tries to push by. Wotan raises his spear and points up to a dark peak around the rim of which red flames are plainly visible. "He who lighted that flame forbids you!" he says sternly and bars the way with his weapon.

This is nothing to Siegfried, let the old man get out of the way! Lifting *Nothung*, with one blow he splinters the imperial, rune-bound spear of the Father of the Gods! Lightnings and thunder, and the brighter flaring of the distant fires accompany this revolutionary act, but the bird comes warbling and wobbling back, and Siegfried puts his horn to his lips and winds a mighty jubilant blast and pushes on utterly unmindful of the broken old man behind him, who gathers up sadly the shattered pieces of his spear and becomes swallowed up in the mists of his own sorrowful abdication.

As Siegfried advances up the slope the red glare and clouds of smoke envelop the stage, but as he successfully negotiates each fiery defense and finds it to be but camouflage, the air clears and we see once more the beautiful height where Brünnhilde sleeps so quietly beneath the great pine-tree. Stamping through the last feeble embers at the rear comes Siegfried, full of delighted curiosity, and looking about him discovers the shining figure on the rock. Coming over, he investigates more closely and is somewhat chagrined to find that some other man has arrived before him. He takes off the helmet for a better view and is enraptured with the sleeper's beauty. Strange that he does not waken! He will

loosen his armor, then perhaps he will rouse. Cutting the lacings of Brünnhilde's breastplate, he drags off the heavy thing and regards with amazement the soft, white-covered bosom revealed. "Why this is no *man!*" he cries, in naïve surprise, and for the first time in his young life feels terror. He bows his head to hide the rush of swift, inexplicable emotions, and his lips touching her radiant cheek, he bends over and does by instinct and in untutored ignorance just what every other man present wishes he might do—he kisses the radiant creature full upon her red mouth.

The orchestra sings sentimentally about all the beautiful, sorrowful and inspiring things this kiss is at once the fruit and the harbinger of, while Brünnhilde opens her wide, surprised eyes at the sun. Disregarding Siegfried for the moment, she sits up and to the most magnificent sweep of mounting chords, voices her greeting to the light and the dawn. The libretto does not allow her to leave her rock, she must convey her rapture with her voice, her facial expression, her gestures; and it is one of the supremest tests of the singer's art if she successfully avoids giving the impression of what some iconoclast has described as "stretching." Siegfried watches her in silent fascination, and when she sees him and demands who has thus awakened her, he proudly proclaims himself to the motif of his *Hero* theme. Brünnhilde, who now has a new motif, very lovely and descriptive of her womanhood, recognizes her hero, names him "Siegfried," and sings happily to him of the long dreams in which she has loved and waited for him. Together they join in a transport of emotion.

Suddenly Brünnhilde's eyes fall upon her discarded spear and shield, upon Grane, her horse, grazing at a distance, and she remembers in the midst of her new joy the bitterness of her punishment, the heavenly privileges which she has forfeited. She tries her old shout hesitatingly and finds it changed and softened. Saddened, wretched, she droops from her lover; but his impetuosity, together with all the inspiring motifs which the orchestra can command, contrive to dispel her gloom, and in a duet of superb exaltation and mutual trust and consecration, the act is brought to an end. If Brünnhilde is only upon the stage for eighteen minutes every one of her 1080 seconds is fraught with enough beauty and wonder to be thinly spread over many longer and less inspiring scenes. Doing nothing at all for two and a half acts, she is called upon to sing for a more or less weary audience one of the most difficult scenes ever written, but it is worth waiting for, it is a very shining memory for us to take home with us for the night.

DIE GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG

This, the last of the Trilogy, is really more like "regular" opera than any of its predecessors in the *Ring*, and although it is long and its name is long, it is, from a dramatic point of view, the most stirring of them all. Its plot, although the culmination and conclusion of those which have gone before, is complete within itself, and is fraught with breathless suspense and superb climaxes. As for the music, besides furnishing us with the most magnificent and emotional accompaniment to all the chief incidents it is also a pleasing recapitulation of all those themes which have by this time become dear and familiar friends. Then, too, it gives us what, with the exception of the *Walküren octette*, we have not had before—the chorus.

The first two scenes are in the nature of a *Vorspiel* or Prelude, and although the first of these, known as the *Nornenszene* and created merely to give atmosphere, is usually cut in this country, we will give it here just as it is all supposed to unfold. The action follows hard upon the events of *Siegfried*. There is nothing we need to have explained for the moment.

The parting curtains reveal the wild, rocky height where Brünnhilde slept. It is night and Loge's Magic Fire still glows faithfully. In the twilight we can barely distinguish three veiled figures swathed in gray, who sit at a distance from each other and are supposedly spinning. These are the Norns, the strange offspring of old Mother Erda, who read the Past, the Present, and the Future, all of which they weave into their skein. This skein each one holds as she sings what she knows, then tosses it aptly to her sisters. Candidates for Norns must be very expert at this before they can qualify.

They are concerned because they can no longer wind their strand around the World Ash which used to grow here. Norn number one describes it and the lovely pool of Wisdom at its base. It was here that Wotan drank and left an eye in payment for Fricka. But he also removed a branch to make into his famous Spear, and the Ash Tree withered. The second Norn goes on to say that when a certain young man (Siegfried, of course!) broke this same Spear, Wotan retired to Walhalla and ordered out all his heroes to cut down the stump of the World Ash and pile it, ready to ignite, around the castle walls. . . . "While he sits there silent in the midst, waiting for the end!" continues the youngest Norn, number three. So they gossip and toss their skein about

adeptly. One of them declares that poor Loge's heart bleeds, that the splinters of Wotan's spear pierced it, and that the blood is flame to consume Walhalla. But when? That is the question. In her agitation one of the spinners pulls a trifle too hard on the strand which has been passed around a projection of rock. The thing snaps and instantly these sisters of gloom are thrown into a panic. With hysterical little cries they huddle together like three frightened sheep, and winding what is left of their skein around themselves they run frantically off to join their wise old mother.

The dawn now comes up with some haste, and the watch-fires fade. Almost immediately it is broad daylight and we hear crashing joyfully in the orchestra a familiar theme, *Siegfried's Call*, which has, like its master, grown up overnight and become adult and important. Out from the cave on the right comes a happy domestic group. Siegfried—a glorious, resplendent Siegfried—wearing the shining armor which originally belonged to his wife, and then the radiant Brünnhilde, upon whom her investiture of a mortal woman's nature rests like a gracious cloak, and last but not least the famous air-horse, Grane. This is our first real glimpse of him and we are glad that Wagner explains that the animal was, with his mistress, deprived of his magic endowments, otherwise we might fear from his appearance that he had never had any ambitions.

The two lovers are bidding each other an ecstatic good-by, during which we recognize in the orchestra many themes which we know—*Grane's Gallop*, *Siegfried the Hero*, *Brünnhilde the Woman*, among others. Brünnhilde is not one of these selfish wives who wish to keep their husbands always at home: on the contrary, wisely recognizing that his adventurous nature would soon be bored, even with her, on this mountain-top, she is speeding him forth to new deeds of valor. She has given him everything she has, her wonderful self, and all the wisdom of her runes learned in her Goddess days, also the lesser matter of her armor, and now, as a farewell gift he may have Grane.

Siegfried is charming in his reception of all this and declares chivalrously that, clothed in her love and in her armor, and seated on her horse, he will be but her arm stretched forth into the world! Finally he gives her, not realizing the dubious value of it, the Ring, which she receives rapturously, placing it upon her thumb and covering it with kisses—so human has she become. One last embrace, one last burst of musical fervor and he is off down the slope with the reluctant horse. Brünnhilde leans far over the precipice watching and waving fondly until the Curtain

ends the scene. The music, however, goes right on with Siegfried in an orchestral interlude known in concert halls as *Siegfried's Rhine Journey*. We hear his *Horn* and his *Hero-motif*, something of the *Magic Fire*, then a little reminiscent skittishness on the part of *Grane*, and other appropriate motifs; then all at once, broad and deep, the magnificent sweep of the mighty river, as we knew it back in *Rheingold*; the *Song of the Rhinemaidens*, the *Gold*, the *Cry of the Nibelungen*; and then finally a new motif, which we shall see belongs to a family named *Gibichung*.

When the curtain rises again we see the primitive tribal stronghold of the Gibichungs directly on the river's bank. At the back, between two carved wooden columns, we can see the historic stream, while at the right, at a laden table sits the family, chatting pleasantly after their noonday meal. In the places of honor are Gunther, the Chief, and his pretty sister, Gutrune, while below them is their ugly, dark half-brother Hagen—who is, incidentally, the "hate-child" of the dwarf Alberich, and bred for the exact same purpose for which Wotan instituted the Wälsung race: the retrieving of that desirable, fatal Ring. Hagen knows everything, of course, through his father's tuition, and is even now hatching a plot. Gunther plays right into his hands.

"I am a fine fellow, am I not, Hagen? And the head of a mighty tribe!" he suggests, craving admiration.

"Very," agrees the evil one. "Too bad not to perpetuate so much excellence. Preposterous that both you and your sister remain unwed!"

"True!" admits the simple Gunther. "But the difficulty is, where find a woman worthy of me?"

Now Hagen has just been leading up to this, and proceeds, with the aid of the orchestra, to fire the Gibichung's imagination with a description of the peerless maid, Brünnhilde, in unattainable isolation upon her fire-girt mountain. He neglects, however, to state that she has already been wooed and won. Gunther is entranced. The only trouble is that he cannot exactly say that he is totally without fear and the flames seem problematical. Hagen has a solution for that too. There is a mighty hero abroad in the land—a fit mate for Gutrune, by the way, if given a proper love-potion—who, if he mistakes not, will shortly come in this direction, and will doubtless be glad to do this little commission for Gunther. Pat upon the cue is heard Siegfried's *Horn*, and with a promptness purely operatic, a little barge containing him and the apprehensive horse pushes up to shore.^a He disembarks and is gratified by the enthusiastic reception offered

him, shows some concern for the proper stabling and currying of Grane, and then amiably announces his name and his willingness to either fight or be friends, whichever his host prefers. But friendship is the thing to-day, and the men come down into the hall in jovial conversation. Siegfried is quite overcome by his host's warmth, and the number of his possessions, and declares that he himself owns nothing but a sword forged by his own hands.

"But all the gold in Fafner's cave?" interposes Hagen.

"I left the stuff right there. It didn't interest me!" the hero replies. He is, however, still possessed of the *Tarnhelm*, which is visibly suspended from his girdle. But the *Ring*, where can that be? If Hagen knew music, the orchestra could tell him!

Gutrune, after one look at the shining hero, has fled to prepare her most potent love-drink and arrange her hair. Now she appears and with pretty words of welcome offers the horn to Siegfried, who accepts with pleasure. Let it be said to his credit that he drinks to Brünnhilde, *her* name on his lips as the malicious liquid passes them. Almost instantly he sees Gutrune in a rosy mist of desirability and has completely forgotten any other attachment! He loses no time in approaching Gunther for the hand of his sister, and learns to his surprise that the noble lord is also a bachelor craving a mate. When the attractions of a certain lady dwelling on a fire-girt peak are described to him, he is boyishly eager to do this errand for his new friend. What is fire or a high mountain to Siegfried? Difficulties only whet his eagerness. Gunther and Hagen enthusiastically agree, but first they must swear "Blood-Brotherhood" according to the conventional ceremony then in vogue. Siegfried, although the untutored child of nature, seems to know just how this is done. It is a bit unpleasant, this idea of cutting one's arm and letting the blood drip together with that of the new friend, into a cup of wine which both must drink. However, they seem not to mind, and get it over with dispatch, whereupon Gunther and Siegfried, arm in arm, start back for the Brünnhilde mountain. Hagen sits himself down with his spear and shield in the doorway to watch, and Gutrune, all of a flutter over the pleasing turn affairs have taken, goes off to bed, as the Curtain falls.

The next scene is the heights again. Brünnhilde's motif is heard and the curtains part to reveal her all alone seated upon a rock, contemplating in fond sentimentality the Ring upon her thumb. Her thoughts, so the orchestra explains, are of her dear experiences with Siegfried. Suddenly she lifts her head and lis-

tens—she heard something in the wind! It has grown very dark and Loge's fires are burning higher again. Once more the haunting sound is heard. Ah! She recognizes it now! Of course, it is the gallop of an Air-horse! In another moment the rider has dismounted, there is an off-stage *Valkyr-Shout*, and on rushes Waltraute, the nicest of the eight Wish-maidens. Brünnhilde is pathetically happy to see her again, but cannot imagine how she dared brave Wotan's anger by thus going against his commands.

"Oh, if he only *would* be angry again!" sobs Waltraute enigmatically. Brünnhilde is distressed, something very dreadful must have happened in Walhalla.

"It has indeed!"

Waltraute plunges into a moving description of the very conditions which the Norns were so concerned over in the opening scene. The walls of Walhalla are piled high with the faggots of the World Ash, the Gods assembled in the Great Hall in awful and solemn silence. Wotan is on his throne in their midst, speaking not a word, staring before him with expectant, burning eye, and clutching his splintered spear. Freia's Apples go untasted, the gray veil of old age descends upon the Immortals. All the Heroes sit waiting—waiting, and the eight Wish-maidens cower weeping at their father's feet. Only once did she, Waltraute, leaning close to his bosom, hear him sigh something about a magic Ring, which if returned to the Rhine, would end all these harrowing tribulations. Therefore, at her first opportunity, she has stolen away to plead with Brünnhilde for the Ring. Her sister looks at her in outraged astonishment. Give up the *Ring*, her Siegfried's love-token? Waltraute must be mad to ask such a thing! But still, of course, Waltraute is only a Goddess, she could not be expected to understand these glorious woman-joys!

"You refuse to let it go? Is the calamity fallen upon the Gods nothing to you?" gasps the Valkyr.

"Nothing at all in comparison with my human love!" says Brünnhilde, with a tone of finality. She is sorry, but it is too much to ask. After all, what had *she* from the Gods to merit such a sacrifice? So Waltraute goes off in a cloud of resentment and unhappiness, and Brünnhilde, strangely serene, goes back to her sentimental dreams.

But only for a moment. Night has fallen by this time and the watch-fire glow floods the scene with lurid light and shadow. Suddenly the flames seem to flicker and die, while *Siegfried's Horn* is distinctly heard in the near distance. With a joyful cry Brünnhilde leaves her dreams to greet the dear reality. Her

Hero has returned sooner than she expected, but how welcome! After all, it has not been too cheerful all alone here with not even Grane for company! She springs eagerly toward the approaching figure, then suddenly she recoils in intense alarm, for this is not her shining Hero, but a sinister Unknown, clad in strange and rough armor. His face is covered (by the *Tarnhelm*) but his voice calling her strikes terror to her heart. As he approaches she flees, stumbling wildly, from him. But his advance is threatening, he means to lay hands upon her! Screaming and shaking with terror, she lifts the great Ring at arm's length and invokes its power to thwart him. None but Siegfried would be proof against such magic, but this man seems to have no fear—nothing can stop him. (Of course not, he *is* Siegfried, explains the excited orchestra.) Not only does he defy the Ring, but with a mighty wrench he wrests it from her and places it unconcernedly upon his own finger. Poor Brünnhilde, her last defense gone, sinks vanquished and forlorn upon the ground. But her harsh captor has little sympathy. Seizing her roughly by the wrist, he drags her to her feet and drives her before him into the cave, for it is too late to think of starting home to-night.

A careful observer of the conventions, and a meticulous adherent to his oath of "Blood-Brotherhood," this Siegfried-Gunther now draws his sword and announces his virtuous intention of leaving the naked blade on guard between himself and his prisoner.

The curtain falls.

ACT II is painful in the extreme. Brünnhilde must drink yet deeper of the cup of disillusionment. The curtain rises upon the Gibichungs' hall, where Hagen sits faithfully on guard just where we left him, although the night is far spent. To him, in his dreams, comes Alberich, his Hate-father, looking, in the center of a green spot-light, like a livid corpse of some unburied evil. Carried on the orchestral themes of all his words imply, his sinister voice urges his son to greater efforts toward the retrieving of the *Rheingold*—but he need scarcely trouble to be so emphatic, nothing is nearer Hagen's heart than this very mission.

As the Dwarf sinks back into the earth, day begins to break and with the rising sun comes Siegfried, smiling and pleased with himself and the ease with which he has dispatched his business. He has made a speedy and pleasant journey under the auspices of the *Tarnhelm* and is here a bit in advance of Brünnhilde and Gunther, who are approaching by boat. His first eager inquiry

is for Gutrune, who, awakened by Hagen's lusty "Hoiho!" comes promptly on the scene to greet her lover. He tells her proudly all about his recent exploit, while she hangs fatuously upon every word.

Soon Hagen, standing on the shore, reports that the boat has been sighted, and at Gutrune's request winds his horn, calling in all the tribesmen to share in the festivities about to commence. As Siegfried and Gutrune enter the house, the male chorus gathers upon the stage. Every description of cave-man is here. The arrangement of their hair and garments is a diverting study of the prehistoric. Their vocal powers are as sturdy as their primitive weapons. Lustily they shout and beat their shields with joy when told that two weddings are about to take place in the family, with all the attendant delights of flowing mead and roasted ox.

In the midst of all this excitement the little boat draws to the shore, and Hagen leads in a pale and hollow-eyed Brünnhilde, whose gaze rests hopelessly upon the ground, indifferent to all these diverting sights. Not until she hears a dear and familiar voice chanting strange words—relative to his marriage with one Gutrune—does she raise her tear-dimmed eyes to rest them in joyous surprise upon her husband. Tearing her hand from Gunther's grasp, she runs to Siegfried, only to stop, shocked and frozen, before the blankness of his gaze. It is all very queer! The tribesmen are puzzled, Siegfried politely mystified, Gutrune and Gunther frankly indignant. Siegfried's unresponsiveness is too much for Brünnhilde after the strain of her night's adventure, and she all but swoons in his arms.

"Look to your wife, Gunther!" he says, the while politely sustaining her, but showing no sign of recognition.

She gasps faintly, "You do not *know* me?"

"Yes, you are the betrothed of my good friend Gunther, as I am of his sister!"

Brünnhilde's moment of weakness not yet over, her reeling senses receive yet another blow. She sees on Siegfried's hand the Ring which the supposed Gunther snatched from her last night. This is impossible to understand! "How came *he* by that Ring?" she demands wildly of her captor. Honest Gunther, never having seen the Ring before, is somewhat perplexed. His confession is so sincere that Brünnhilde, regaining by this time her customary intelligence and insight, suddenly perceives that she has been outrageously deceived and betrayed. Of course, she *might* have known it was Siegfried, if she had not been so utterly upset last

night. Who else could have caused the watch-fires to die down so obediently or have remained unmoved by the power of the Ring? So it was Siegfried her husband, who betrayed her! This knowledge scarcely alleviates her suffering, for she cannot know yet of the insidious love-potion, and no one enlightens her. Fiercely she turns upon him in accusation, but he smiles patiently, and courteously but firmly insists that this Ring was never in any way connected with a woman. He got it from a dragon's lair after a stimulating fight for its possession.

Brünnhilde gives him a heartbroken look which plainly says, "How *can* you!" then turning to Gunther unlooses the force of her righteous indignation. "You must not befriend yonder man!" she screams. "He has betrayed you as well as me!"

Now Brünnhilde, with pardonable vindictiveness, may have meant Gunther to believe that there was no naked guardian sword in last night's adventure, but also she doubtless could and did mean that, Siegfried being already her rightful husband, Gunther is almost as imposed upon as she. Her words have the desired effect. Every one is astounded and shocked. Siegfried, totally at a loss to explain this amazing development, insists upon his innocence and resorts to the then-honored custom of oath upon a weapon which is supposed to kill without mercy if one be proved perjurer. Hagen, who has remained a silent and satisfied observer of the trend of events, which seem predestined for his own ends, offers his spear. Siegfried steps forward, lays his self-righteous hand upon its tip and invokes, in a phrase of suppressed excitement and portentous solemnity, the power of its murderous point to slay him if he be not innocent. Brünnhilde, a white flame of wrath, pushes her way through the interested group of men, and laying her hand upon the same weapon, employs the same musical phrase to bind her own vow of vengeance. It is a stirring scene, a dramatic climax scarcely equaled in all lyric drama. But Brünnhilde's inspired wrath is to Siegfried only a case of overwrought nerves to which frail woman is subject, as he explains jocosely to the assembly. We wonder where he learned so much about the sex in his rather limited experience. Throwing off with slight effort the oppressive atmosphere of the incident just concluded, he places his arm affectionately about the shoulders of Guttrune, and leads her away to the dining-hall, whither he jovially invites the tribe to join him in feasting.

Brünnhilde, Hagen and Gunther are left alone on the stage to present one of the finest dramatic trios in all of Wagner's works. Gunther is outraged at what he feels is the truth of

Brünnhilde's story. Hagen encourages him, and Brünnhilde, as tempestuously passionate and humanly jealous in this crisis as she was flamingly impetuous in her Goddess days, offers to help in any baneful plan which shall accomplish the undoing of her betrayer—whom she loves with every beat of her noble heart!

Hagen says complacently that the only possible solution is Siegfried's death, and the other two feel that probably he is right. Poor Brünnhilde, distracted, broken-hearted, cannot even call forth the runes of her God-learned wisdom—all—all, were given to Siegfried! Nothing is left but this frightful desire to see the thing dearest to her suffer. So they may kill him! By her magic she has made him invulnerable except for his back. A Hero needs no armor there! So let them devise a method to treacherously attack him in that spot and the deed will be done.

Therefore a hunt is planned for the morrow, an occasion when any sort of "accident" may happen, and, as the terrible ensemble is brought to a close of high-pitched emotion, the Bridal Party enters, Siegfried and Gutrune flower-crowned and borne aloft on decorated shields, leading the gayety. The three tragic figures are swept into the throng as the curtain descends.

Feeling intuitively that we have had almost enough of storm and stress for the moment, Wagner has been inspired in the opening scene of the last act to alleviate what has gone before and what is to come by a pretty interlude of idyllic charm. It is a lovely bit of the forest, bordered at the rear by some little tributary of the Rhine. It is the afternoon of the fatal hunt, and Siegfried, always, in his exuberance, out-distancing every one else, has for the moment become lost and separated from the party. There is a hint of the *Forest Magic* or *Waldweben* in the orchestra, and then a more familiar, lilting strain, the mellifluous, swaying *Song of the Rhine Daughters*. Sure enough, just lifting their pretty weed-crowned heads above the lily-pads are Flosshilde, Wellgunde, and Woglinde, trying to attract the attention of our Hero. Siegfried needs small urging, he has never seen anything like these ladies before and eagerly leans over the bank to converse with them. Although incapable of much serious thought, the playful trio are here to-day upon a quest for a stolen Ring—that very ring which Siegfried wears upon his finger! They laugh and swim about and tease him for it. We infer from his remarks that he means to give it to them after they have earned it by entertaining him awhile longer. He rallies them and pretends indignation at their request. These maidens, how-

ever, think he means to deny them, and so call to him excitedly that he had really better let the Ring go, for it brings only danger and unhappiness to the wearer. But they have unfortunately used the one argument which might be calculated to make him keep it. Where danger stalks Siegfried pursues! Nothing so appeals to this Hero-without-fear as that very quality in a situation which excites fear in others. So he changes his mind and keeps the Ring, merely because it promises future thrills, and the Nixies swim off chattering and singing their eerie song, half laughter, half tears.

Now the horns of the hunters are heard close at hand, and soon the stage is filled with the burly tribesmen who, well pleased with the day's slaughter, pile the game in limp heaps and sit down to rest. Hagen and Gunther join Siegfried, and doffing their uncomfortable headgear, sink down on the bank beside him in amiable sociability. It is the hour for refreshment and story-telling, before they take up the weary homeward journey, and Siegfried is induced to tell them the story of his life. Were no words sung upon the stage, we still might trace his narrative, step by step as the dear, beautiful, familiar themes are marshaled through the orchestra. Beginning with *Siegmund and Sieglinde's Love*, and taking us through the *Forging of the Sword*, the *Young Siegfried's Call*, the voice of the talkative *Bird*, the slaying of the *Dragon*, the finding of the *Ring*, and *Tarnhelm*, are all there in unmistakable clarity.

Now Hagen, with a refinement of deviltry, surreptitiously squeezes the juice of some potent herb into the horn of mead which the story-teller holds. After his next draught, his memory is suddenly restored and he goes on in his tale up the *Fierly Mountain* to his earthbound-goddess bride (*Brünnhilde*). Just here there is the sound of wings and two strange fowl flap jerkily across the stage. These are Wotan's Ravens, now flying home to Walhalla with the long-awaited news that the end is at hand. Hagen points to them dramatically. "Look yonder!" he cries craftily to Siegfried, and when the Hero unguardedly turns, plunges that very spear upon which he swore his innocence, straight into that tender, unprotected place between his shoulder-blades. It is a mortal blow, but Siegfried, almost as much surprised as hurt, has, we are glad to say, breath enough left to sing his last happy memories of *Brünnhilde's Awakening*, and to hail her as his love, before he expires.

With the passing of the Ravens, twilight fell suddenly. With the accomplishment of the murderous deed, black night has come.

The men, shocked and saddened, although not comprehending what they have seen, gather about the fallen Hero respectfully and lift his body with clumsy tenderness upon his shield, to bear him home. Hagen and Gunther follow in solemn though nervous satisfaction at the culmination of their plans. Just as the little procession begins to climb the rocky path, the moon breaks through a cloud and shines with eerie light upon the winged helmet and golden hair of the lifeless Siegfried, while the great *Trauermarsch* or Orchestral Funeral Oration begins. This is one of the most magnificent, terrible, and overwhelming of inspired compositions. The valor, the passion, the glory, and the pathos of a dead hero has never been sung with such moving eloquence. It would do to play above the bier of any hero of any time or place, so perfectly does it express such noble bereavement—but for Siegfried, whose untrammelled life-adventures we have watched with ardor for now these many days or nights, it is unequaled in its epitome of his attributes. Its framework is nothing in the world but the old happy *Horn-call of the Forest Boy*, which grew up with him into more adult expression when he fared forth upon his *Rhine Journey*, and is now invested with tragedy and made to serve as a mighty march to his grave. Storm, shock, and horror are woven now into the notes and the great drum accentuates the force of the world-calamity with all the power of its resonance. At the very end, strong, beautiful and clear, comes the inspiring theme of *Siegfried the Hero*, first heard on the lips of Brünnhilde as she told Sieglinde her glorious news so long ago, and now grown to its fulfillment.

The curtain falls.

The last scene is once more the hall of the Gibichungs, toward which the funeral procession is just approaching. Hagen enters first and calls for Gutrune, to whom he explains as plausibly as possible the death of her betrothed. Gutrune, naturally much upset, does not give much credence to this story of a boar's tusk in the back, and in the violence of her grief frantically accuses each of her brothers of the deed. They both deny it, and, their nerves on edge anyway by this time, draw their swords upon each other and before the men can separate them, Gunther has fallen. Shrieks and groans from the spectators! Hagen, however, has only one objective, the Ring upon the dead Siegfried's hand. Recovering himself, he strides eagerly toward the bier and attempts to seize the circlet, when suddenly the hand itself is lifted with gruesome and forbidding gesture and Hagen, with all the rest, falls back in terror and panic.

In the midst of their moans and cries and shuddering laments, suddenly a serene and noble figure appears between the columns at the rear. It is Brünnhilde, whom no one had remembered to advise of the tragedy; but she knows everything at last, for unable to rest, she wandered this day beside the river and heard from the Rhine Daughters all about the love-potion and the explanation of Siegfried's seeming treachery. So she has understood all and forgiven all, and has come calm and exalted to this her great moment of vicarious expiation. All fall back respectfully before the goddess-like aloofness of her presence. Long and tenderly and sorrowfully she gazes at her dead World-Hero—then suddenly turns to the crowd of serving men and women and orders them out to build a great funeral pyre. From now on during her last long speech we see the men with faggots and the women with garlands passing across the scene.

Again Brünnhilde turns to the body of her beloved and—like Isolde—seems to see him smile. He was to her the Sun, the dazzling light of purity, might and right. He is gone, and the end of all approaches! Now she understands all—all there is to know! The Gods await the end and she will give them peace. Let the Ravens bear the message swiftly! So saying she signals to the bearers to carry the body out to the now completed pyre. Snatching the Ring from Siegfried's hand she holds it aloft upon her own and sings to her sisters, the Rhine nymphs, that soon now they shall have their prize which shall be purified of evil in the fire of her immolation. Beside herself now, in a white frenzy of exaltation, she snatches a torch from one of the men and ignites the fire. As the flames mount she sings on and on in magnificent abandon until it seems as if the strain must break her or her hearers. When it becomes almost unbearable, she sends for her faithful Grane and as he comes on, to the hoof-beat of his remembered theme, she seizes his bridle, confides in him the glorious fate ahead of him, and then rushes with him into the wings where she presumably springs upon his back and rides straight into the consuming flame!

With a crash and a sweep of mighty themes which can only mean the end of an epoch, the scene draws to a swift conclusion. In the sky is seen a fierce and dreadful glow. *Walhalla* and *Fire!*—cries the orchestra—the Twilight and the Fate of the Gods has come! From somewhere in the depths of the music's thundering finality we hear the waters of the Rhine rising and the voices of the Nixies singing. The great river has overflowed its banks. In a black flood it mounts to the blazing pyre and

quiets the flames, while from a wave rises one of the eager daughters and exultantly seizes the Ring. But other waves inundate the hall and Hagen is caught and dragged under as the waters recede. There is now a certain peaceful exhaustion in the orchestra, and above all this wreckage of plot and counter-plot, allegory and parable, a quiet, hopeful theme seems to insist that another day even now dawns in the East—the day of Progress and Enlightenment.

The curtain falls.

DER ROSENKAVALIER

By RICHARD STRAUSS

First sung in Dresden, 1911

"DER ROSENKAVALIER," or *The Knight of the Silver Rose*, will probably live longer than Strauss' *Salome*, for although much less sensational it is equally brilliant and far more pleasing in subject and remarkable in treatment. In fact, although very long, this opera is extraordinarily diverting, full of tunes, lavish of costume and lively in action. If the humor is of a Teutonic breadth, it must be remembered that it is sincerely consistent, for the opera, or "comedy of music" as the composer calls it, is extremely local, vigorously and intensely Viennese, the scene laid in the time of that enlivening city's greatest glory, the rococo days of the Empress Maria Theresa. For intensified local color the composer has made bold and anachronistic use of typical waltz themes, and much of the dialogue is in the vernacular.

After a short orchestral prelude which describes musically such incidents as the stage manager has thought best to delete, the curtain rises upon an ornate boudoir belonging to the Feldmarschallin Princess von Werdenberg. There are folding-doors in the center, and at the left in indiscreet prominence we observe an alcove which harbors a magnificent bed, and a screen about which are tossed various and sundry articles of clothing. In the foreground, reclining upon a couch in frou-frou elegance is the Marschallin, a delightful looking creature, who, although no longer in the first flush of her youth, is decidedly attractive. On his knees beside her, his ardent arms about her waist, is the most charming person imaginable, Octavian, Graf Rofrano. He is supposed to be seventeen years old, of a guileless and youthful prettiness, impressionable, sentimental, hot-blooded, naïve, of highest birth and breeding, and the most decadent morals. Of course this is an intriguing rôle for a prima donna, with a mezzo voice and a flair for farce and whimsy in her dramatic make-up, and Maria Jeritza has done much to ingratiate the character into American affections. It is early morning, and the naughty youth

is bidding an impassioned farewell to the Marschallin, whose husband is conveniently away on a hunting expedition. Perhaps it is his first affair and holds an added savor because the lady is old enough to know better, but at all events we can scarcely blame her, for the boy is irresistible in his awkward tenderness, his droll ecstasies. "Quin-quin" she calls him, and "Bichette" he finds as a name for her.

In a lively dialogue, which ever savors of the colloquial, they talk of love and dreams, with some prudent uneasiness on the part of the lady for fear her husband may choose to spring a little surprise upon her and return unannounced. They do eventually hear an unmistakable sound of little bells, and through a side door suddenly appears a very diminutive African, dressed in fantastic design, who comes forward with mincing steps and rolling eyes, bows elaborately, and presents a tray upon which reposes something in the way of breakfast. Then he carefully backs from the room, never moving his adoring eyes from his mistress' face.

This interruption has scarcely been noticed by the lovers, but now sounds of running, knocking, and argument advise them that some one more disturbing is certainly about to intrude upon their duet, and Octavian snatches up his ornamental little sword and makes a great show of protecting his lady against any unwelcome visitor. The Marschallin, however, with fond and amused tolerance at his bluster, thinks it more expedient that he depart forthwith. But it is too late, the doors lead right across the path of those approaching. In an hysterical panic, the boy finally dashes behind the screen in the alcove, drawing after him his absurd sword, just in time, for the sounds in the corridor increase. The Princess is nervous and anxious, and Octavian, mischievously peering over the screen, drives her crazy with concern as to just what antics he is up to now. In another moment, however, it is revealed. The hare-brained boy suddenly comes from behind the screen arrayed in petticoats, kerchief, and cap of a chambermaid, looking very pretty and appropriately *gauche* with his tousled curls and thick waist. It is indeed a feat of impersonation for an *actress* to create the illusion of a *boy* dressed as a *girl*, but that only renders the scene more keenly piquant. The Marschallin is convulsed, especially as the outlandish maid pays her respects in broad Viennese dialect, and snatches one ardent kiss as a knock is heard on the door.

Octavian strides to open it and in comes an extremely unpleasant, fat and middle-aged *roué*, the Baron Ochs von Ler-

chenau, the Marschallin's kinsman, accompanied by three lackeys. Scarcely has he stepped over the threshold than he notices the blushing maid, who, with remarkable awkwardness, is desperately trying to get out of his way. "Her" fresh and buxom personality registers immediately on his jaded interest and he scarcely remembers his errand. With a distracted eye he approaches his noble cousin and makes the most ludicrous effort at the latest French bow. He seats himself near her. He has come to follow up his note which he sent (and which the Marschallin has forgotten to read) and ask her to find for him a Knight of the Rose to bear the silver flower to the lady of his choice—as was the charming custom of betrothal in those pictorial days. He is about to affiancé Fräulein Sophie, daughter of the merchant Faninal, a social climber who has recently managed to get himself knighted. Ochs does not hesitate to say that the match attracts him because of the *dot* connected therewith, but the girl is "a pretty little piece of meat" and it is not so bad, not so bad! In the meantime, he is not in the least averse to a slight flirtation on the side with any likely girl he finds, for example, the blushing young giantess who let him in.

The Marschallin, who is vastly entertained by the situation and by Quin-quin's distaste for the overtures of the Baron, explains that her new serving-maid is lately from the country, green, unspoiled and not to be trifled with. The infatuated Baron with whom, out of sheer bravado, Octavian has begun a clumsy and absurd exchange of glances, begs the gift of this servant for his young bride, but the Princess, to Octavian's horror, sends for the miniature beneath her pillow, shows the fatous old man the really startling likeness between the young Graf Rofrano and the "girl" and allows him to draw his own *risqué* conclusions as to why she cherishes this maid near her person. Now she mischievously bids "her" whom she calls Mariandl, to serve them with breakfast, which Octavian does with a burlesque awkwardness that is designed to be convulsing, and they go on with the arrangements for a Knight of the Silver Rose. The Marschallin has just the one in mind . . . with a sly look at her maid . . . and all will be well. In the meantime the pompous Major-domo of the Princess' elaborate establishment enters and announces the usual crowd of visitors to be in the antechamber. After prudently commanding Mariandl to disappear, much to the Baron's distress, the Marschallin settles herself to enjoy the morning levée which apparently great ladies of the period instituted as part of the rococo atmosphere in which they thrived.

First enters the Major-domo with punctilious liveried lackeys; then the *chef* and his scullion, with their huge menu-book. A tirewoman brings towels and a basin of water, and officiously directs two servants as to the placing of a dressing-table; an obsequious and nervously important hairdresser with his assistant take their places behind the Princess; a frightened young tenor with a flautist to accompany him, tries to gain a hearing for his new song; a widow hung with crape like a hearse, with her three highborn daughters, comes in to make her delicate hint for alms, and is distressed at the girls' lack of tact; a milliner displays some outrageous headgear; and, best of all, an animal fancier appears with his arms full of real little dogs and monkeys. While the hairdresser plies his art with nervous little false starts and anxious gestures, the pleas of the others are heard in confusion, to the detriment of the irascible Baron's very short patience, and his fair cousin's intense amusement.

A notary arrives to adjust the papers, and two insidious hangers-on, the Italian conspirators, Valzacchi and Annina, who earn their living in most reprehensible fashion, succeed in gaining the Baron's ear and selling him their services for any underhand affair he may wish to start. Before the Attorney draws up the marriage bonds for the Baron, the Lerchenau servants are admitted to lend dignity to the occasion, but they are not prepossessing looking, says the libretto, as if they had been recruited in some barnyard and pressed into some one else's livery. But apparently their master is perfectly satisfied.

At the conclusion of the contracts, the Baron pompously calls for his jewel casket, which one of the burly, unkempt individuals carries, and exhibits with pride the really beautiful Silver Rose, which the young Graf Rofrano is to bear as emissary. With much satisfaction and a great show of importance and ceremony, von Lerchenau herds his little army from the room, the Italians insinuating themselves into the train.

The stage is now empty save for the lovely Marschallin. She has told the hairdresser, to his intense grief, that he has made her look like an old woman to-day, and her thoughts are somewhat bitterly pursuing this trend. It is all very stimulating to have a youthful lover, but like most stimulants, there is nothing permanent about it. Once not so very long ago, she was, like the little bride Sophie, young and fresh from a convent, "the glowing girl, the pretty Resi," but in just as short a time—alas, shorter—she is doomed to be "the old Princess Theresa," the wife of the elderly Field Marshal! How can such discouraging facts per-

sist in so good a world? It is all very sad! This song of the Marschallin's is her most famous number and shows off a lovely high voice in an utterly delightful and appealing manner.

Octavian, having resumed his own clothes and looking very perky indeed in his little velvet uniform and big top boots, now comes in from the alcove in time to hear a little of this depressing soliloquy, and with whole-hearted enthusiasm endeavors to combat her melancholy mood. He carries the doting woman almost off her feet with the ardor of his protests and his embraces, he stops his ears and will not listen to reason, he poses with exaggerated gestures of sentimental despair, he makes renewed love to her like a gusty young whirlwind. But the Marschallin has, after all, a fairly level head. Letting him blow himself cold, she suggests that after she has made a morning call and lunched with a relative, she will probably drive in the Prater. Of course if a certain young gentleman should care to ride a bit beside her carriage, she would not find it unpleasant, but now he must be off.

Octavian, perfectly content, takes her at her word, and catching up his sword and cocked hat, skips off through the big doors, leaving the lady a little breathless and resentful of his casual leave-taking. After all, he *might* have kissed her . . . perhaps it was her fault. In a panic of disappointment she frantically pulls the bell-rope and despatches her servants after the young gentleman, but they reappear in a moment breathless and confused—the young Count leaped on his horse like a demon, rode off like a wind, struck sparks, was gone before a person could even see him!!! The Marschallin, however, has thought of something else; she sends for Mahomet, the tiny negro boy, and despatches him to the Count Octavian Rofrano, bearing the elaborate casket of the Silver Rose. "He will understand!" she sighs, deeply, wistfully.

All through this last scene the orchestra has been weaving a magic web of tantalizing, shimmering melody. "Vienna—Vienna!" the instruments sing, "beautiful, frivolous, and glorious Vienna!" as the curtain falls.

ACT II takes place in the salon in Faninal's over-decorated palace. When the curtain rises, the fond parent is there in the act of saying good-by to his daughter, who stands clad in virginal purity, very palpitant and impressed with the things which are happening to her. The Major-domo, with a forced tolerance for these *parvenus*, urges Faninal to hurry away—apparently it would be a fearful breach for the father to be present when a

Silver Rose is presented. So the men leave and Sophie is alone with her *duenna*, Marianne, a thin, excitable lady who is in the throes of perfectly delicious thrills over the romance developing under her nose. Now she is leaning from the window and reporting on all the inspiring sights of the street. The crowd of eager people, the approach of the Kavalier's coaches (for special effect he evidently has two, one for himself, one for sheer ostentation); the cries of the populace, "Rofrano!" "Rofrano!"; the splendor of his retinue and so forth. All this she retails in a gloating voice, while Sophie piously entreats the Almighty that she may be sensible of the great honor and happiness about to be hers.

After an expectant moment or two the great doors at the rear fly open and Octavian's servants enter in their delightful livery of white leather, faced with Nile green, and his spectacular personal bodyguard follow in their white Hungarian uniforms edged with fur, holding at attention their splendid curved swords. Ranging themselves effectively on either side, they make a wonderful frame for the slight youth who now appears alone in the door, holding himself erect and very still, clad in pure white satin small clothes which gleam with embroidery of a thousand brilliants. In his hand he holds by the tip of its stem the Silver Rose, and in his cheeks are the charming flags of excitement and embarrassment. With a lovely dignity he goes forward with the little ceremony of presentation, the orchestral theme as correct, as earnest, as serious as he.

The Rose is received, admired, its natural scent commented upon. "Yes," he answers boyishly, "we put a drop of rose attar on the petals." So the ice is broken and the two young things begin to get acquainted. It is quite easy, they seem to have known each other, in fact to have loved each other in some previous existence. (Is there no new idea under the sun?) At any rate it has not taken them long, while looking into each other's eyes, to know the truth . . . they are for each other. Sophie awakens from her daze long enough to give her Rose to the fluttering Marianne, who puts it reverently in its box and carries it away. The two go on talking. It is of enthralling interest to find out just how much they know of each other, and how old they are, and that Sophie has looked up Octavian in "Who's Who" and even knows that he is called Quin-quin. It is just too *perfectly wonderfully thrilling!*

Their naïve little scene is interrupted, however, by the discordant arrival of the bridegroom and Papa. Von Lerchenau,

who always moves about to rollicking strains of a gay waltz tune, is followed by his same uncouth retinue of clowns, who look even more ridiculous than ever, as they, like their master, are carrying the symbolic twigs of myrtle. They find great difficulty in arranging themselves in the room, step on every one's toes, and seem a general menace, but the Baron ignores them. He is duly presented to his young bride, and looks over her points as carefully as if purchasing a filly. The girl blushes with surprised resentment, and Octavian nearly bursts, as he is forced to become a silent observer of the ensuing scene. The Baron goes blithely from *gaucherie* to *gaucherie*, even including the boy in his ill-chosen remarks. His efforts to engage Sophie in conversation are most discouraging: the poor girl is embarrassed and ashamed at his insinuations and approach.

Faninal, however, is drunk with the glory that has come to his house. A real Baron courting his daughter, and a perfectly good Count of the royal family sitting there, just as natural! It is almost too much for him to bear. A bottle of his best tokay may better express his feelings. The refreshments are received with appreciation, and in high good humor the Baron goes into an adjoining room to sign the momentous contract. No sooner is he gone than the two youngsters fly to each other. Octavian is accustomed to sweeping all before him, and Sophie too has a mind of her own. She is completely disillusioned as to her bridegroom, and feels ill merely thinking about his pock-marked face. "Well, that settles it! You and I will marry instead!" cries Octavian. . . . (Oh, poor Marschallin, how well you knew the boy, after all!) They fly rapturously into each other's arms and sing full-heartedly of their youth and their new-born, age-old passion. In the midst of this effusion, out from the secret doors, on either side of the stage, spring simultaneously the Italian intriguers, Valzacchi and Annina, who, having been posted there by the suspicious Ochs, now raise a hue and cry which brings the bridegroom and his almost-father-in-law in on the run. The two guilty young people are exposed in all their ardor. Octavian, as the man of the affair, is the first to recover what poise he can. He starts a sentence designed to inform every one that "Die Fräulein" has changed her mind and decided on other arrangements, but the Baron with licentious joviality persists in misunderstanding him. "Die Fräulein . . . Die Fräulein . . ." will Octavian never manage to finish his sentence? Somehow at last he gets it out. The startling fact is that *Die Fräulein* does not like her fiancé. The Baron laughs.

"What a tough hide!" exclaims the exasperated youth. Well, Ochs may consider this all "baby-talk," but he takes the precaution to whistle for his uncouth little army of retainers, before approaching to seize his bride in his arms. This is too much for Octavian's hot blood. Out comes his eager little jeweled sword, and in a moment the fat old Baron has been slightly pinked in the arm and is yelling and squealing like a stuck pig. The greatest confusion ensues. One would suppose the fat creature to be murdered from the fuss he makes. Women come running with basins, his blundering servants in search of bandages try to tear the women's clothes, and demand in hoarse voices that rustic remedy for all wounds, a dirty spider's web. Faninal is overcome with shame, but at a loss which of the noble gentlemen to break with—it is a delicate problem. In the meantime a doctor has been brought on the run, who announces with some asperity that the patient will not die. As a matter of fact, some more of that good wine of Faninal's does the work and von Lerchenau begins to recover.

Whatever Octavian may be, he is a gentleman, and when the two intriguers enlarge upon his misdemeanor to Faninal, he apologizes with pretty grace for the whole incident. Faninal does not dare to do anything but accept, but begs the boy to depart from his house at the earliest possible moment. Octavian realizes that he must, indeed, but tries to prolong the process as far as possible. He searches for his hat, he adjusts a buckle, in one way and another he manages to linger near Sophie, who now, in a perfect passion of resentment, declares she will never marry her repulsive old suitor. She is full of the most unfilial suggestions as to what she will do if Papa tries to force her hand.

During this time the Major-domo has entered, and gradually cleared the stage of the excited mob, while Marianne pushes Octavian off in one direction and Sophie in another. Now we see the Baron revealed upon his bed of pain, and Faninal making ridiculous obeisances and pouring out apologies. The wine, however, has restored the bridegroom's confidence and humor. He watches the irate parent with approval as he goes off to administer chastisement to the erring child, and satisfies his spleen by breathing colorful Viennese curses upon the head of his Rosenkavalier. He is due in a moment, however, to forget his troubles in a most beguiling diversion. The Italian Annina suddenly enters with much show of mystery and hands him a note. We suspect her of treacherously going over to the enemy. We noticed her and her husband conferring slyly with Octavian a few minutes ago

and without doubt his service pays better than that of the stingy von Lerchenau. The Baron fatuously tears open the *billet-doux*. It is written in broadest dialect and purports to be from the buxom Mariandl, maid to the Marschallin, who had so caught his roving eye that morning. The bold girl seems to have taken him at his word and now agrees to meet him for supper and whatever he likes, at a certain inn—to-morrow, her night off. The Baron grins from ear to ear, his fat and unpleasant face glowing. "My usual luck . . . the luck of the von Lerchenaus," he sings.

Annina gently reminds him that he has forgotten the messenger; but no tip forthcoming, and disgusted with his gloating smugness and his tight purse-strings, she goes off with an unseemly gesture behind his back; and as he raptly contemplates the treat in store for him to the tune of his special little waltz motif, the curtain falls.

ACT III. This act is almost like a three-ring circus. There are so many things to watch and listen to that one has a sensation of dizziness. The scene is laid in the private room of an inn near Vienna, the spot where the supposed Mariandl, the chambermaid, has agreed to meet Baron Ochs von Lerchenau. This room, however, is like no other one in the world; it is as unreliable as the two Italian intriguers who have engaged it for their patron. They are here now, ahead of time, and as the curtain rolls up Valzacchi is in the act of making up the face of his wife, who is disguised in garments of deepest mourning. All through the first part of this scene much goes on upon the stage in pantomime, but no word is sung or spoken, the orchestra supplying, with mischievous enjoyment, the atmosphere of farcical mystery and surprise. A questionable looking old woman admits Octavian, who is once more dressed in the clothes of a maid, but his appearance is utterly absurd, for he has neglected to remove his high riding-boots which show under his full skirts as he strides about the room with exaggerated swagger. When he has occasion to remove something from his pocket, which is located where all men's are, his difficulties with his petticoats are broadly diverting. The Italians are delighted to see him and show him the most marked respect, and Annina arranges his bows and kerchief with fond concern.

Presently five men looking like cut-throats come in and are received by Valzacchi, who disposes them in the oddest places, with a great show of elaborate caution—behind blind windows, back

of false doors, and through a trap in the floor. A clock strikes; it is almost time for the show to begin. He and his wife go out, and immediately he is back again. He claps his hands and suddenly all the hidden ruffians stick their heads out—another clap and they disappear as if by magic. All is well! The innkeeper and waiters come in to light the candles which are all about, leaving the door behind them open, through which we hear the sound of a waltz. Then with a flourish, Valzacchi admits the Baron, who is leading the mincing, sniggering “Mariandl” by the hand. All the attendants are obsequious . . . will the noble gentleman have more lights . . . louder music . . . perhaps a larger room . . . ? But Ochs is satisfied with things as they are, or in fact there is too *much* light. He waves out some of the candles. And there are too many people around . . . out with the waiters, too! As for the room, he confesses it looks a bit fishy. But the blind windows and other features are hastily explained, and at last every one withdraws leaving only the two diners and the Baron’s unpleasant body-servant.

Mariandl has spent a prodigious time in front of a mirror arranging “her” hair but now allows “herself” with coquettish reluctance to be drawn to the little table. Naturally the first thing the Baron is interested in is the wine, which he pours for both of them, but Mariandl takes a sip and makes a face. “She” is too coy for words, no, she doesn’t drink wine . . . in fact she had better not be here at all. Trying to blush with maidenly grace, Octavian jumps up, catches his spurs in his skirt, has a frightful time straightening himself out. But the fatuous old gentleman seizes his hand and drags him back to the table. Now begins a scene of utter and delightful foolishness, Octavian growing more and more perfect in his rôle, the Baron becoming sillier and more doting by the moment as the wine takes effect. Mariandl is touchingly affected by the music, which wrings tears from her girlish heart, she must be comforted . . . consents to hold the Baron’s fat hand. He would like to take a kiss too . . . but the girl seems to have St. Vitus’ dance, doing such strange things with her feet! The fact is that the man in the floor trap has put his head up too soon, and Octavian has had to thrust out a booted foot and press down the door.

The Baron thought he saw something, but could not be sure. Probably dizzy! He leans back in his chair. The evening is warm and the fumes of the wine strong, he might as well be comfortable—so off comes his wig. He looks about for a place to put it, and encounters another hastily disappearing face. This

is really getting on his nerves, there must be something the matter with his brain. He glances over at his guest. Mariandl is in an extremely relaxed position, more often assumed by boys than by young ladies, but von Lerchenau finds the "girl's" naïveté charming and returns to the table with clumsy tenderness. Gazing at the young face, he is again unpleasantly reminded of the Graf Rofrano. He starts back and sees another uncouth visage pop through a hole in the wall. He presses a cold compress to his bald head, and rings a bell furiously—this thing simply cannot go on!

But worse is yet to come. Through the supposedly blind door now steps Annina, followed by four black-clad children, who run forward and shrill, "Papa, Papa, Papa!" while Annina with nasal voice makes moan. "At last, my husband . . . my husband . . ." and throws herself upon him. The poor old thing is by this time seriously concerned for his own sanity. He is sure that he never saw the woman before . . . and yet it is perhaps rash . . . there have been so many . . . but no, it is all an outrage, he will appeal to the landlord! This worthy, however, having been previously subsidized, proves unexpectedly a constituent of the opposing forces. He and the waiters join loudly in a clamor of pity for the abused woman, and he advises the Baron not to go too far, that bigamy, should it be proved, is a capital offense. The children again add their pipes to the general confusion, and Ochs, finally throwing caution to the winds, opens a window and calls for the police.

The watch appears with a gratifying promptness never experienced in modern cities, and very naturally requires a few explanations, which the Baron finds it awkward to give. His appearance is not prepossessing, his manners could not be worse, and the constable seems inclined to regard him as the culprit. Then Mariandl has to be accounted for in some way. She is his fiancée, Fräulein Sophie Faninal, let it go at that. In the meantime, however, Octavian has had a messenger sent for Sophie's papa, who now appears on the scene, expecting the gratification of a dinner with his high-born son-in-law-to-be. He finds instead, a disheveled, half-crazy fellow, looking for his wig, and telling amazing lies to get himself out of a mess. Naturally Faninal repudiates Mariandl as daughter of his, and when the confused Baron, with some ostrich idea of escaping trouble, refuses the merchant any recognition, and the four children again commence their libelous clamor of "Papa, Papa!" it gradually dawns upon the good burgher that perhaps this particular scion of the nobility would not be a too

valuable addition to any family. In the emotion of his discovery he almost faints and has to be supported from the room by his lackeys, just as Sophie arrives in her sedan chair and assumes charge of her stricken parent.

The embarrassed Ochs, having hastily clapped his hat over his bald pate, at last discovers his wig again and assumes it with a sigh of relief. He now feels better able to cope with the situation, tries to dismiss all his troubles with a very grand gesture and turning to Mariandl, says he thinks it is high time that she was taken home. "Not so fast," objects the constable. Octavian draws him aside and whispers something in his ear which seems to amuse him, he snorts in uncontrolled glee and follows the "girl" into an alcove behind a screen, from which presently there comes a shower of female garments. Ochs is appalled by the officer's brazen behavior . . . but the audience need not turn a hair, knowing all.

Suddenly, on all this confusion reënters the landlord, breathless, to announce Her Highness, the Marschallin, Princess von Werdenberg. Behind a small retinue of perfectly mannered lackeys comes the great lady, very exquisite, very marvelous, very magnificent. The Baron is overwhelmed that she has condescended to come to his rescue, and Octavian, sticking his saucy head over the screen, is surprised into exclamation. The Princess, however, is remote and gracious in her attitude, staring in patient puzzlement as her uncouth relative tries vainly to block the outer door. But two lackeys easily thrust aside his bulk to admit the gentle Sophie, just as Octavian, clothed and in his right personality, comes from behind the screen. Sophie has come to say that Silver Rose or no Silver Rose, she and her parent are done with Baron Ochs von Lerchenau forever, and no amount of arguing on his part makes any impression on her serene young ears.

Now introductions are in order, and the two loves of the gallant Octavian meet face to face, and find each other strangely pleasing. There follow all sorts of explanations and dénouements, and further humiliations for the Baron, who at last knows whom he has been entertaining as his charming young "Flapper," and learns that he must renounce all idea of this Faninal alliance. Astounded by such injustice, he calls his lackeys and in disgust starts to go, but his way is stopped by Annina, and the prattling children, and by all the various servants of the inn, presenting prodigious bills for the evening's entertainment. Struggling through the crowd somehow, the apoplectic gentleman makes his escape. Octavian

turns to the Princess, who has sunk into a chair, saying rather sadly, "I too renounce . . ."

Sophia sees the youth's devoted air and decides that all is over for her, too, and that she had better go home and try to forget; but she has not reckoned on the heart of the Marschallin. This great lady is as wise and generous as she is beautiful. She listens a little abstractedly to her Quin-quin's protestations, she has read his burning looks, and knows that they are no longer for her. With truly remarkable insight for one of her sex and century, she realizes that her day is over, and capitulates to youth, sending her fiery young lover on his way to the feet of his new sweetheart, although wiping a tear of regret at the same time. On her way out, she pauses and looks the young girl over critically. Yes—on the whole she will do. Sophie blushes and curtsies prettily and Octavian, desperately torn between his two alliances, looks a bit emotional and miserable. Out of the fullness of their hearts they all sing a trio, fine and refreshing for anything coming so late in so long an opera; and at the end, the Princess, seeing that she is quite unnecessary to either music or action, withdraws into a side room for a moment, leaving the lovers to sing and embrace alone, in a ravishing duet built from haunting orchestral memories of Octavian's first coming to Sophie as her Rosenkavalier.

Now suddenly the doors open to the footmen of Faninal, carrying lighted candles and preceding with great ceremony their master, who quite conscious of the superb honor done him, holds high the patrician hand of the Marschallin, who has graciously condescended to be driven home in his unworthy equipage. They smile tolerantly at the two young lovers in the foreground, and go their pompous way unnoticed.

One long-drawn-out, delicious kiss and they too leave the stage, suddenly seeming very empty and dim. There is a musical pause in the action, then a tinkle of little bells. Sliding through the center door comes the small Ethiopian, holding a lighted candle, and swiftly running here and there in the room, searching for his lady's handkerchief, which she dropped. He finds it and tinkles quickly away, as the curtain falls.

SALOME

By RICHARD STRAUSS

First Produced in Weimar, 1894

"SALOME" is an opera which should be extremely taboo for Grandmothers and even Parents, Aunts and Uncles. The only people who really *enjoy* it are probably those same sensitive creatures who naturally gravitate toward the Morgue as the primary attraction on a sightseeing trip. Nevertheless in it there is much beauty, just as there is beauty in the stillness of death, in the crimson of blood, and in the velvet of slime. And it is all out of the Bible. *Out of it* is the correct expression. The story is, of course, the thing, but the music can nowhere be disentangled from it. Every gesture, thought, word, emotion of the play is a part of the musical fabric, which can be said to minutely *describe* rather than to *express*, as does Wagner. The orchestra is very large and is often divided and sub-divided into "choirs" which chatter together and argue antiphonally about the action on the stage. If you wish to read the plot on the earliest authority look up Matthew 14: 3, but if not, let us plunge at once into the Strauss-Wilde version.

There is only one act, only one scene, a terrace outside the palace of Herod, the Tetrarch of Judea.

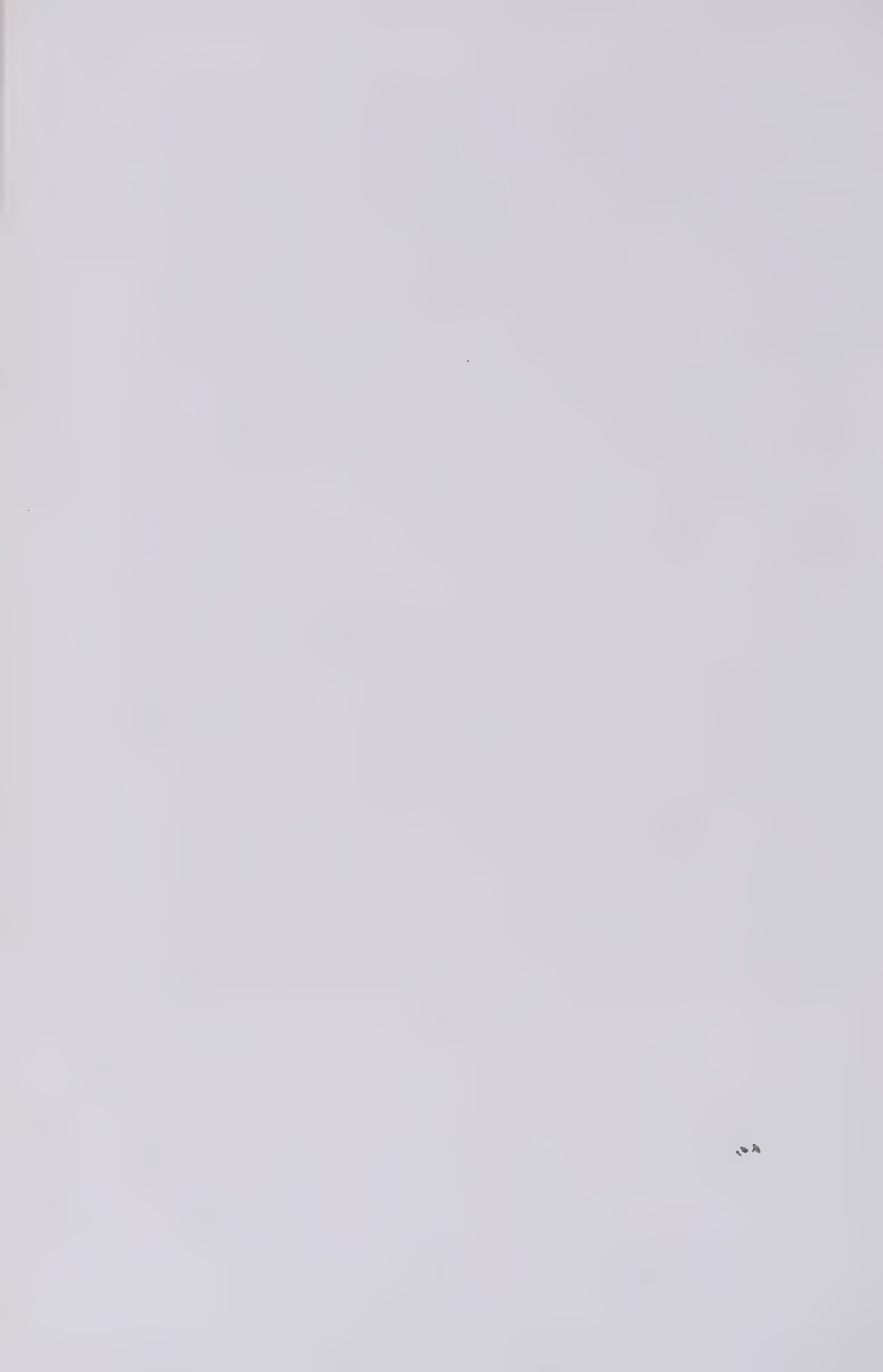
It is a lustrous summer night, the moonlight touching everything with uncanny pallor. To the left is a great stairway and platform, entrance to the banquet-hall; below, near the center of the stage is an old cistern or well; in the rear are the trees of the garden. Soldiers are loafing about the balustrade, and their young captain, Narraboth, is peering into the lighted hall. He turns to a page beside him and comments upon the beauty of the Princess Salome, whom he is watching.

"But rather see the moon," whispers the nervous page, "how strange she looks, like a dead woman!"

Sounds of commotion from the hall interrupt them. One of the soldiers asks another the cause, and is told that it is only the old Jews who are perpetually wrangling about religion. "Pooh,



MARY GARDEN AS SALOME



ridiculous!" answers the first. But Narraboth dreams on, quite maudlin over Salome's beauty. The page shudders hysterically.

"Don't look at her so much, don't look at her *that way*. Something awful will happen!"

Narraboth continues to rave, in spite of more interruptions from the observant soldiers. He thinks that Salome looks like the reflection of a pale rose in a mirror.

"For heaven's sake, stop it!" whimpers the poor page. "No good can come of looking at her this way. I'm trembling all over!" The orchestra is as nervous as the page, is haunted by the same nameless dread.

Suddenly a deep, sonorous voice sounds from the depths of the cistern at the right. Sentences of scripture, solemn prophecies which the soldiers cannot understand. This is Jokanaan, more popularly known as John the Baptist, whom Herod has imprisoned below.

"He makes me tired with his talk, tell him to shut up!" complains a soldier; but his friend replies, "Oh, no, he is really a holy man, a great prophet, and very polite and nice when I take him his food."

Narraboth, however, has not even heard. He sees Salome rising and approaching; his heart is in his mouth, his eyes devour her. The page gasps feebly a warning not to look at her, but the captain is hypnotized, he cannot move.

"Here she comes!" he murmurs giddily. "Like a little stray dove!"

She does come, but his simile is not good. She is more like a peacock, a tiger lily, a smoldering flame. Her hair is dusky, her skin dark and glowing, her body voluptuous, sinuous, her garments careless, alluring.

She draws a long breath and looks up at the moon and the stars.

"Ugh! I could not bear it another moment in there, with that horrible husband of my mother's leering at me with his pig eyes, and the old Jews quarreling and those coarse Roman brutes! What a lovely moon, like a virgin! She is a cool silver flower in the sky!"

The page whimpers again and tries to make Narraboth turn away his fascinated eyes. Suddenly once more the voice of Jokanaan from the well.

Salome starts with interest.

"Oh, that must be the prophet that Herod is so afraid of!" she exclaims, moving nearer.

"Well, we don't know about *that*, Princess, but anyway it is the Prophet Jokanaan," remarks a soldier.

Narraboth is unable to keep away any longer. He interrupts.

"Let me order your litter to take you to the gardens, Princess!"

But Salome does not even notice him and goes on talking with the soldiers.

"Yes, he must be the one who has been tearing Mother's reputation to bits!"

"No one understands him, Princess," says the soldier tactfully.

"Well, he does say awful things about her," Salome informs him. "How old a man is he?"

"Rather young," replies the soldier.

A slave comes from Herod to command Salome's return to the feast. Narraboth urges her; but she brushes him off impatiently, she is fascinated by the voice which again sounds from the cistern. She thinks she would like to talk to the man. This creates a stir among the soldiers, it seems that talking to the prophet is *Verboten*, even to the High Priest. But Salome, once the idea has seized her, is obstinate. She wheedles and commands, but in vain. Then she has a brilliant thought. The mawkish Narraboth is an easy victim. She lures him like a serpent, and the poor weak creature promptly flutters into her power. She shall have her wish; and while the wretched page cries that now he *knows* something terrible is going to happen, the Prophet is led forth. He is making impressive utterances which fall on the girl's ears like music. She likes everything about him, even when he begins to curse her mother's moral lapses one by one.

"Isn't he terrible!" breathes Salome deliciously. "Make him say some more!"

"No, no, come away!" cries Narraboth, becoming more and more upset.

"Let me alone," Salome protests. "I want to look at him closer. My, but he is thin! Like an ivory carving. Let me nearer. . . ."

"Now, Princess!" warns Narraboth.

But Jokanaan himself very properly resents this inspection.

"Who is this woman with wicked, yellow eyes?" he complains. "I don't wish her to look at me. Send her away!"

"I am Salome, daughter of Herodias," the Princess explains with a touch of pride; but of course as that is Jokanaan's favorite subject, he immediately begins again about her mother.

Salome circles about him, entranced.

"What shall I do about it all?" she asks amiably.

"Ah, seek repentance at the feet of the Son of Man!" he thunders.

"The Son of Man?" murmurs the frivolous child. "Is he as handsome as you?"

Jokanaan cannot endure this, as you may suppose.

"Flee from me!" he cries. "I hear the wings of Death!"

But Salome does not want to flee. She likes him better than ever. She has always had everything that she wanted and now she finds *him* desirable. She begins to describe his fascinations in no uncertain terms. Jokanaan's hair fairly rises on his head. He commands her silence. A little peevish, Salome changes her attack, but not her method. This time it is his mouth which attracts her. A kiss would amuse her.

"Never!" cries Jokanaan desperately; while Narraboth, surprised and shocked, implores her to stop.

She presses her point. "I want to kiss your mouth, Jokanaan!"

Poor Narraboth cannot stand any more. He prefers, and achieves, death on his own sword.

It is a mere incident to Salome, the killing of an insect. "Let me kiss you!" she wheedles.

Jokanaan tries another defense.

"Are you not afraid, Daughter of Sodom?" he cries. "Ah, hasten before it is too late to Him who can redeem you. He will be in a little boat on the Sea of Galilee. Go, kneel on the shore. He comes to all who call!"

But Salome believes there is a certain value in repetition.

"Let me kiss your mouth!" she insists petulantly. "I will!"

Even the saint is out of patience. He curses her roundly and retires to his cistern. At that moment Herod comes out.

"Oh, so there you are!" he cries, as he spies the Princess. His eyes gleam.

"Do stop looking at her that way," complains his wife, Herodias. "It is disgusting!"

Herod obligingly looks at the moon instead. He compares it to a drunken woman reeling through the sky. Yet he likes it out here, he orders carpets and cushions and wine. As he is about to sit down, he slips a trifle in Narraboth's blood.

"Ugh, a bad omen!" he exclaims, as he pokes the corpse with his toe. "I don't remember having commanded this particular execution!"

A soldier explains that it was a suicide.

"Oh, well, take it away. Perhaps it is just as well," says Herod casually, recalling that the captain was not uninterested in Salome.

But something is bothering him, he isn't feeling quite himself, there seems to be a beating of wings in the air. (There is, in fact, distinctly, in the orchestra.) Herodias is solicitous, urges him to have a little more wine. However, he suggests rather that Salome is the one in need of attention, she is as white as a sheet. The girl spurns the proffered wine and fruit; her mind has but a single trend, the unexplored personality of the Prophet. She refuses even a place on the dais. Herod is piqued, and Herodias tactlessly reminds him of his humble origin as compared to her own and Salome's royal blood.

In the midst of their bickering, the voice of Jokanaan, prophesying, sounds from the cistern. Every one begins to argue, Herodias and the Jews clamoring for the man's death, Herod uncertainly defending him. The Jews immediately become tangled up in a discussion on prophets and their ways, until the Queen is bored to tears, but some men from Nazareth supply the startling information that the Messiah Jokanaan is always talking about has been seen to raise people from the dead.

"Dear, dear," says Herod, much disturbed. "That will never do, I cannot have the dead coming back, it would be a great inconvenience!"

Again the voice from the cistern decrying the "Daughter of Babylon" and Herodias guiltily feels that he indicates her.

"Not at all, do keep still!" growls Herod, who is fairly hanging on the Prophet's words. However, as his wife is really becoming a little too wrought up, Herod thinks it best to introduce some distraction. Ah, Salome shall dance for them! But Salome does not want to. Her defiance pleases her mother immensely.

However, Herod thwarted is only Herod more eager. He offers the stubborn girl anything she wants in the world if she will dance. Now Salome is no fool.

"Repeat that offer on oath, dear father!" she insists.

Herod, now maudlin with desire to see, repeats his offer obediently, adding for Herodias' benefit, that it includes half of his throne. Suddenly those old rushing wings bother him again. He thinks he needs water, or ice, or that his wreath of flowers is too warm for the evening.

Salome now decides that she will oblige, so slaves bring ointment for her feet, and the seven veils which she will later unwind for the delectation of the spectators. Her dance is a high-light in the opera, the music is wild, throbbing, undulating, lasting for long moments. Only the most intrepid and willowy of singers undertake it themselves. By darting behind the shrubbery osten-

sibly to wind her veils, Salome can be neatly understudied by a professional *ballerina*, whom she relieves toward the end by much the same expedient in the shrubbery. However, *prime donne* have a natural appetite for *tours de force*, and nowadays if a singer can sing Salome at all she usually can and does herself perform the *Dance of the Seven Veils*. It is more or less interesting in direct ratio to her agility, her temperament, and her physical attractions. At the devastating *finale*, Salome is, or pretends to be, exhausted from her efforts, pausing for a short rest beside the cistern, but finally flinging herself at Herod's feet.

"Great! Absolutely splendid!" applauds Herod fatuously. "Come up here, little one, and ask your reward. Nothing is too good for you!"

"Well," begins Salome, slowly and sweetly, "I should like to have—on a silver charger. . . ."

"To be sure, to be sure, on a silver charger!" laughs Herod, mellowing by the moment. "Charming, naïve, is she not? What is it you want on a silver charger, my dear?"

"The head of the Prophet!" declares Salome, with delicate non-chalance.

Herod is stunned, aghast. The orchestra shares his emotions. A bit white about the gills, he carefully explains to her the complete unpleasantness of the thing she asks for. But Salome is not squeamish, she wants what she wants, and for once her mother is in entire accord with the idea. The Jews also murmur intense approval. So in spite of Herod's fascinating description of jewels and what-nots that he will gladly substitute, she gets her way and the fatal order is given.

Those in the audience who are already feeling a little ill had better leave now, for the orchestra proceeds to describe graphically what is going on down in that cistern. The ax falls, the sinews are cut, the blood flows—all most unpleasant. Then, as Salome eagerly hangs over the coping in order to miss none of the delightful details, a great black arm appears from below bearing the silver platter and the severed head.

Salome, the gentle, artless creature, thereupon seizes her prize and proceeds to play with it. The ensuing scene is emphatically not pretty. Her behavior with the head, certain expressed convictions to the contrary, is neither guileless nor childlike. She proceeds to obtain for herself, to put it briefly and honestly, all the satisfaction which the Prophet denied her when alive. Even Herod is revolted and does not wish to see any more of the spectacle. Most of the audience who have not already departed, share

his feelings. But Herodias is quite delighted, everything has gone exactly to suit her, and she follows her husband regretfully up the stairway. He is hearing those wings again and is full of inexplicable terror. He orders the lights extinguished and bemoans the fact that he has no control over the moon and the stars. Shuddering with apprehension, he glances back as a moonbeam falls on his delightful step-daughter absorbed in her ghastly diversions. It is too much.

"Kill that creature!" he thunders, and the soldiers, rushing forward, crush the girl beneath their shields.

The curtain at last mercifully falls.

SAMSON AND DELILAH

By CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS

First Sung in Weimar, 1877

IN most operas the singer of soprano high "C" has all the glory, and her deep-chested sister is condemned to the rôles of nurses, servants, mothers, or even witches, but the character of Delilah is the contralto's own, with not a bothersome soprano in the entire cast, and for her some of the loveliest airs known for female voices have, for once, been written.

When the curtain rises one is apt to feel transported to the Sunday School days of colored lesson-cards, so Biblical are the costumes and settings. The scene is before dawn at the gates of the city of Gaza, and the crowds of dejected Hebrews, whose lament was heard for a moment before the curtain rose, are bewailing their state of captivity and oppression at the hands of the Philistines, and praying to God to deliver them. Samson, their mightily leader and prophet, also the tenor and ill-fated hero of the tale, stands conspicuous among the crowd, and out of sympathy with their attitude of groveling despair. Why do they moan and weep? Why not rise up and show a little red-blooded resentment?

In a sort of dialogue with the chorus he reminds them of God's past mercies to his chosen people, when captive, and sees no reason why the same thing should not happen again. Instead of all this depression, he suggests that they commence rebuilding their shattered altars and again worship the loving God as He should be worshiped. His words seem to improve their *morale* at once, so that when the mighty Abimelech, the Satrap of Gaza, arrives at the head of a band of warriors and begins to decry their God, to whom he alludes as their "puny Jehovah," Samson retaliates with their spirited support, and after wounding Abimelech, leads them from the stage in such organized revolt that the astonished Philistines can offer no resistance. The High Priest, entering from the temple of Dagon at the left, is aghast at the spectacle of the dying Satrap and the embarrassment of the troops. He expresses himself without hesitation, only to be interrupted by a breathless messenger

who reports that in this incredibly short time Samson's revolt has assumed alarming proportions and that the city is endangered. The valiant Philistine troops beg earnestly to be allowed to flee without delay, and the High Priest relieves his feelings by a magnificent and sonorous curse upon Samson and all his works. The trembling soldiers carry off the corpse of their murdered leader, and as the sun, rising higher, lights up the scene, the stage fills with delighted Hebrew non-combatants, women, children, and old men, who chant and exult over the turn affairs have taken. The old men particularly continue to chatter, even when Samson and the revolutionists enter victoriously. But let him that thinketh he standeth take heed! There are weapons more powerful than swords and staves to overcome the hero.

Suddenly the temple gates open and out upon all this harsh and military aspect comes the beautiful and sumptuous Delilah, followed by the priestesses of Dagon, weighted with garlands of flowers, singing of spring and prodigal with their amorous glances. Delilah herself sings seductively to Samson, seeking to lure him once more to her suburban villa at Soreck, where apparently he has been thrice before but has never yielded to her spell. Goaded by his scorn, she now puts forth every charm known to her Oriental personality; and warned by a fussy old Hebrew, Samson, sore pressed, covers his eyes before the alluring spectacle, praying God to keep him from her fascinations. The dance in which the priestesses now take part has a disorganizing effect on the sturdy Hebrew soldiers, and when Delilah sings her lovely *Spring Song*, concluding with a repetition of her invitation and withdrawing slowly within the temple, Samson, in spite of another warning from the solicitous old Hebrew, shows by every despairing gesture at his command that he succumbs in much spiritual agony.

ACT II shows us the garden and portico of Delilah's abode in the fertile valley of Soreck, to which she alluded so temptingly in the last scene. She did not exaggerate. The place is an earthly paradise, with every sort of sweet-smelling and decorative plant trailing about in ornamental profusion. It is evening. Delilah herself is there, effectively posed on a mossy bench, and clothed with an eye to the devastation of Samson, whom she awaits. She sings pensively that *love* will now put in her hands the power to avenge her people, and that while the entire army retreat before him, she can tame him with her little finger. In upon her thoughts breaks the High Priest, having come, we gather, from rather

mixed motives, partially to reproach Delilah for the plaything she once made of his own heart, but more particularly to enlist this same tendency in an effort to similarly confound Samson, the Jew. No reward shall be too great for her.

Delilah, however, is scornful of material prizes and informs the Priest that even without his suggestion she has already laid her plans. She bears Samson no great affection, it has not been a pleasant experience to be repulsed in her lovemaking three separate times when he happened to hear a bugle blow in his camp.

The Priest invokes the great Dagon to help Delilah's perfidy and then shows interest in the details of her plan, but leaves promptly when he is informed that to-night is the night; with a final injunction to her that she fail not to discover wherein lies the secret of Samson's great strength. Delilah, left alone, sings that she is probably forsaken by her lover, but that if he should happen to seek her the stormy night will make it hard for him to find her. Doubtless the purpose of her song must be to guide any lover within hearing, to her feet. With this assistance and a flash of lightning, Samson finds the place easily, but he is not in a happy frame of mind. He has been here before and knows his danger, but in spite of conscience, here he is once more, unable to resist the siren.

Delilah comes to meet him and they join in a rapturous duet, in which she uses every fascinating ruse from smiles to tears, and he merely vows his love with passionate simplicity. However, something in the ardor of his repeated words of love must warm her to a certain degree of sincere emotion, to which she gives voice in that truly exquisite aria, "*Mon coeur s'ouvre à ta voix*," which is known to all who ever wish to sing in mezzo-soprano about love.

The thunderstorm which has been grumbling in the distance now threatens to break over their heads, just as the storm of emotions in the mighty warrior's breast threatens to burst its bounds. Delilah, with both of her feet upon the earth, seizes the opportunity to beg for his romantic secret. Surely if he loves her he can trust her. The tormented man resists and reads the wrath of the Lord in the thunder. "Defy such wrath!" tempts Delilah, but she misjudges him. He is firm as rock, so she tries another maneuver. Bitterly denouncing him, she turns upon her heel and enters the house. He is stunned—he cannot bear this desertion. Weakly struggling, but at last capitulating utterly, he rushes wildly after her, in the midst of terrific crashes and flashes from the heavens.

Whatever Delilah's methods are from now on we do not know, but they must be of immediate effectiveness, for in another moment the Philistine soldiers, who have crept into the garden, are summoned by a wild and exultant cry from their mistress to come to her aid, and from the window also issues a groan to the effect that Samson finds himself most frightfully deceived and betrayed.

In ACT III we see the sinister result of his imprudent love-making. It is a cell in the prison of Gaza, and the mighty Samson, shorn of his magic and strength-producing locks, has been blinded and chained and cast into this unhappy place, where all day long he must push around the handle of a giant millstone. As he staggers in his painful weariness he sings a lament for his lost sight and a prayer for forgiveness of his scarlet sin. To make his life even more intolerable, from without the prison sounds a chorus of Hebrews who have come there to reproach him, doubtless justifiably, for his betrayal of their trust in his leadership. He can only answer them, as he staggers on his weary round, that he is very penitent and that he prays God for their ultimate delivery.

Now the scene changes to the magnificent interior of Dagon's temple. Although it is scarcely dawn, the entire Philistine population of Gaza seems to be up and about and already occupied in the festivities incident to the capture of Samson. To suave Oriental melodies priests and priestesses enter and defile, and the ballet performs a rhythmical offering of diversion to Dagon and ourselves. Delilah is there in all her glory, and the High Priest, with an imposing retinue of princes. To complete their enjoyment Samson is brought in to receive their mockery and gibes, which he bears with fortitude and dignity, encouraged by the affectionate behavior of a very small boy who acts as his guide. With fiendish ingenuity the proud captors devise further torments for their victim. The hand of the peerless Delilah herself shall serve him with wine. All the spectators wildly acclaim this suggestion and the Princess herself mockingly, tauntingly approaches the broken man, singing in haunting cruelty memories of their love duet, and retailing with bitter ruthlessness the story of her perfidious achievement. The High Priest joins in with jeers, not only at Samson, but at Samson's God. This is too much for flesh and blood to stand. Samson makes a mighty prayer to God for strength to punish his persecutors and blasphemers. The people only laugh at his agony, and the High Priest, turning to Delilah, suggests that the oracle of Dagon settle the matter. So, with

elaborate ritual they prepare the libation, and accompanied by a full ceremonial chorus, Delilah empties the cup on the altar flame. It flares up brilliantly and all the people acclaim the power of Dagon.

Another and better prayer has been heard, however. Just as the Priest turns to command an act of pagan homage from Samson, the blind man, having maneuvered himself between two tremendous supporting columns of the temple, dismisses his little guide and with one cry to Jehovah summons again his fabulous strength and pulls down the entire temple upon himself and all the other sinners.

To us it seems a perilous occasion for the cast, but one is reassured quite soon if one waits to applaud, for the singers will bow without any casualties among the ranks.

TALES OF HOFFMANN

By JACQUES OFFENBACH

First Sung at the Opéra Comique, Paris, 1881

THIS opera is as light as air, as fantastic as a dream, as delicious as sparkling wine. It is an ingenious weaving together of three old German tales into a diverting comedy with music by the brilliant M. Offenbach who unfortunately died before he completed anything but the actual composition, and long before he could have any idea of the popularity his work would attain. The orchestration was done by Ernest Girard, and well done—but not at all in the manner of the composer, which detail will probably not bother the average amateur listener in the least.

The plot concerns the amorous and “quite crazy” adventures of a young poet named simply Hoffmann, without prefix. He lived in the days before the world became too practical, and in the land of the fairy tales, Germany. He was hot-headed, temperamental, completely unpractical, but he had a friend, Nicklaus, of whose sex we have been left somewhat in doubt, who was his guide and philosopher, and got him out of his scrapes at the critical moments. The opera is in Prologue, three acts, and Epilogue, and the rising curtain shows a typical beer cellar in a tavern of some Teutonic small town.

Before any human beings come on the scene we have a diverting chorus by the “spirits” beer and wine, which by the fervor of their “*Glou, glou, glou!*” we may judge to have been no two and three-fourths per cent. Soon a self-important person, the Councilor Lindorf, enters. He is followed by Andres, who is carrying a letter from a certain lady of lax morals named Stella. Lindorf craves possession of the letter as well as of the lady and proceeds to buy off Andres, who proves to be the most helpless and monosyllabic man in all opera. Lindorf, without any compunction whatever, tears open the letter and finds it addressed to “dear Hoffmann,” and to contain an assignation. Lindorf decides to lie low and watch the poet until the time for the rendezvous.

Now the host, Luther, and his waiters bustle in, arranging their tables, mugs and lights, and soon the room fills up with students who sing the most jovial of songs in praise of Luther and the cheer he dispenses. Some one speaks of Stella, who is evidently the toast of the town, and this naturally leads to inquiries for Hoffmann, without whom no gathering is complete. Even while they demand him, the door opens and in comes Nicklaue, who is patently a woman in man's attire, but whether a boy who looks like a girl, or a girl masquerading as a man, you may ask and answer for yourselves, as it pleases you. Hoffmann follows her in and calls for a chair, a dainty glass and a pipe to be provided for his friend, but she with mannish swagger refuses any concessions and drops to a table with the rest, lighting a pipe and humming an Italian air. Hoffmann is in a vile humor and is very sharp with her, and caustic with the others. He tries to shake off his mood with a song, the favorite one about the humpback, *Klein-Zach*; but in the midst of his own singing he goes mooning off on an entirely irrelevant strain, and has to be anxiously recalled by his listeners. It is no use, even the beer has lost its taste! He earnestly desires a beverage upon which he can become satisfactorily drunk—it is the only pleasure left him! Very naturally his companions conclude that he is in love: it is the only logical explanation of such unrest. He is indignant—may the devil take him if he ever commits that indiscretion again! We look at Lindorf for some reason. He appears for a moment uncannily sinister, even diabolical, but of course we may be wrong. The talk turns on husbands, wives and mistresses, and Hoffmann claims that he has three of the latter, but all in one wonderful woman, the peerless Stella—courtesan, artist and "*jeune fille*." The students are intrigued at the idea—so she is all the women he has loved, is she? "Oh, do tell us about them, do tell us a story!" they shout. The lights have burned out, the fire is only a glowing ember, but the moon comes in the casement and shines upon the eager young faces.

"You want to hear about my crazy love affairs?" marvels Hoffmann. "Well, then. . . ." He is something of a von Münchenhausen, this youth, to which fact we owe the following delightful three acts.

ACT I, the First Affair, is naïve in the extreme. We see the study of Spalanzani, a wealthy dabbler in physics, cluttered by all the paraphernalia of his hobby, with wide doors leading to a gallery at the back. This gentleman is "discovered" on the rise of

the curtain, regarding some one supposedly asleep behind a screen, who is, according to his soliloquy, to be the means of refunding him for certain losses sustained through the unexpected bankruptcy of the Jew, Elias. Upon his musings breaks Hoffmann, followed by several lackeys. Our hero is dressed with great care, and in the top of his form, for has he not come to court the beautiful Olympia, daughter of the scientist, although under the pretext of studying physics? But Spalanzani is perfectly aware of his object, and now rings for Cochinille, his sly and unpleasing *factotum*, to light all the candles and get ready for the evening's festivities. It is nothing less than his daughter's début in society.

They go out together, and Hoffmann, musing that physics is a dull thing, but quite worth the effort to win his sweetheart, creeps stealthily to the screen at the rear and peeps through. He sees the débutante evidently taking a little nap before her arduous duties of the evening, and goes into raptures over her beauty, just as Nicklausse comes in. "I might have known you'd turn up!" says Hoffmann with rather poor grace. It pleases Nicklausse to be merry. She teases Hoffmann on his methods of courtship, and then sings a song about a mechanical clock which the poet resents as irrelevant.

Suddenly without any warning a most extraordinary individual is with them, a most repellent creature, an old man in whom we can trace some faint resemblance to the Councilor Lindorf, as the parts are usually sung by the same artist. This is Coppélius, evidently a peddling optician, for from every conceivable portion of his person are pendent a ludicrous assortment of thermometers, big and little, hydrometers and barometers, while a pack which he empties contains every sort of eye-glass, field-glass, and spectacles ever made. He is a meddling old party and goes at once to see what it is that Hoffmann contemplates so raptly. When he sees that it is the sleeping Olympia he is strangely pleased. He promptly introduces himself and extolls his wares, laying emphasis on the fact that he can and does supply eyes, real eyes, marvelous eyes, guaranteed to see more than the law allows. Hoffmann is intrigued; he tries out a glass and contemplates Olympia with added fervor. As they bargain over the price, Spalanzani comes in rubbing his hands, but pauses in dismay when he sees Coppélius. He promptly begins to dispute with him, and we are astonished to hear raised the question of which is Olympia's rightful father. Finally they exchange some papers, Spalanzani evidently buying off the claims of Coppélius by an order on the Jew, Elias. They embrace grotesquely, and Coppélius whispers a hint that Hoffmann would be an eligible

bridegroom for the *débutante*, Olympia. Hoffmann and Nicklaue watch the two old creatures tolerantly.

Now suddenly Cochinille announces that the guests of the evening have arrived *en masse*, and without delay they all enter, singing about what they expect at the party, and hoping for plenty of refreshment. They walk about in groups admiring everything, and are surprised that all the furnishings match. Their host and his servant go out mysteriously. In a moment he is back leading Olympia by the hand. The chorus and Hoffmann go at once into raptures over her attractions, but to us she seems strangely stiff and wooden and costumed after the time-honored mode of the doll in the toy-shop. Her walk is an uncertain teeter, her mittened hands are rigid, her vacuous face beneath its cap and flaxen curls, wears a painted smile. The proud parent displays her without hesitation, however, and offers to have her sing an aria for them. His servants bring a small harp, and sitting down he plays her accompaniment, while she, having been tapped cunningly on the shoulder, begins a florid piece in a voice of great brilliancy from which every trace of human quality has been drained. From time to time she seems to—well, there is only one way to put it—run down, and her parent, jumping up anxiously, touches her on the shoulder and off she goes again at the proper speed. When she has finished, the guests crowd around her with exclamations of pleasure, and she thanks them with stiff little gestures of her right hand, then her left.

At last it is supper-time, the guests turn to this greater attraction, and Hoffmann approaches with infatuated eye. But Olympia's conversation is not enlivening, consisting of a squeaky, "Yes," or "No"; and she does not care for supper. "How poetic!" exclaims Nicklaue, satirically. Hoffmann grows a bit familiar, touches the beribboned shoulder of the young lady, seizes her hand in an excess of emotion; but as if he had pressed a hidden spring, the extraordinary girl jumps up, runs hither and thither with tottering steps, bumps into the furniture, and finally manages to make a safe exit through the door, but without using her hands to open the portières. Hoffmann is beside himself. This frantic behavior can only be the result of reciprocated passion. "The girl loves me!" he cries fatuously to the amused Nicklaue, who tells him that there are strange rumors current about his sweetheart, even a hint or two that she is nothing human.

They go out and in comes Coppélius in a terrible rage, tearing his scanty locks, and stamping on the floor. He has just found out what we know already, that the Jew, Elias, is bankrupt and

his check worthless. With a fiendish snarl he disappears into the sleeping-apartment of Olympia, just as every one in the cast comes back on the stage. A waltz is played and Hoffmann bows before the débutante, embraces her, and moves off in the measures of the dance; the others sing and watch them eagerly. Off and on the stage they go, always dancing a little faster, a little more furiously, Hoffmann's face pale and set, Olympia's never changing from the rapid wooden smile. The faithful Nicklaus becomes worried and tries to stop them, but is caught in the impetus of their rush and whirled dizzily against a chair. Now the parent fears for his child, and halts her mad careening with a touch on the shoulder. She stops dead, but Hoffmann drops. Cochinille solicitously guides his squeaking young mistress from the room while the guests sing loudly of their wonder and amazement. Hoffmann revives; only his eye-glass was broken, after all.

But worse things are happening in the débutante's boudoir. There is a sound of whirring springs, a crash of china and metal, and the frightened Cochinille rushes out screaming, followed by Coppélius, who drags a mangled and sawdust wreck of the beautiful Olympia, and snorts with satisfied vengeance. Spalanzani springs at his throat, while Hoffmann collapses with agonized cries of, "An automaton, she is an automaton!" The chorus laughs lustily, as well they may, for they did not have any magic eye-glasses, and the joke is not on them. The curtain falls.

ACT II. Now Hoffmann has imprudently gone wandering in Venice on a summer evening. It is moonlight on the Grand Canal, and some sort of *festa* is going forward, with colored lights and flower-hung gondolas passing up and down. A gay company of young blades comes on the terrace, while from off-stage the contralto of Nicklaus mingles with the soprano of Giulietta, whom we have yet to meet, in the dulcet strains of the famous *Barcarolle*. It is the best known number of the whole score and is sung and played and travestied endlessly in restaurants, theaters, and even gymnasiums for the delectation of four continents. The two singers enter languorously and we see that Giulietta is very dangerously beautiful, with an allure that speaks not of virtue. Hoffmann, however, feels himself impervious. "What pleasure is there, anyway," he muses, "in languishing at the feet of beauty?" Laughter and gayety for him henceforth!

A gentleman named Schlemil approaches the courtesan and congratulates her on her new victim, but she says she has wept for *him* for three days, and when a be-furbeled youth named Pitichi-

naccio laughs at this, Schlemil rudely calls him a *Microbe*! Giulietta interposes with a suggestion that they all go in to the faro tables, and Hoffmann and Nicklaus are left alone on the terrace. The latter has scented trouble, for she announces that she has two fast horses already saddled against Hoffmann's need. "Pooh!" exclaims the poet, "do you think I'm going to be foolish enough to fall in love with a courtesan?" Nicklaus doubtless thinks that he is foolish enough for almost anything, and the Devil is sly and clever and prone to tempt.

Unobserved, a very sinister individual, one Dapertutto, has appeared in the background and seemed to relish their dialogue. When they go off he begins a fantastic invocation to some dark power, and declares that Hoffmann shall not escape. If we examine this person carefully we shall find a haunting resemblance to Lindorf and the unpleasant Coppélius. As he sings he suddenly takes from his pocket the largest diamond we have ever seen, which sparkles and glitters with an unhealthy light. He addresses it respectfully and directs its evil powers upon Giulietta who now approaches in a sort of fascinated daze. He places the giant ring upon her finger and instructs her as to her victim. He, Dapertutto, is not satisfied with the shadow of Schlemil which she has gotten for him, he now desires the *reflection* of Hoffmann. Giulietta is a trifle surprised at this odd request, but is perfectly willing, especially when she hears that the poet defied her charms. Dapertutto kisses her hand, and disappears as the victim approaches. Their encounter is brief, with instant victory for the lady. Hoffmann capitulates to her charms without a struggle, and the first thing he knows he is reclining in her voluptuous arms, gazing with her into a mirror and promising her his reflection or any other little thing she may happen to desire.

Their raptures are interrupted by the arrival of some of the card players, among them the jealous Schlemil, who now laughs with some bitterness and directs the others to look at the new candidate. Giulietta relinquishes Hoffman, but first whispers romantically in his ear, "I adore you only . . . get my key away from Schlemil!" The young man starts up eagerly, but the malevolent Dapertutto appears again and suddenly holds up a mirror. "See how pale you are!" he admonishes, but the distracted Hoffmann perceives that there is no reflection upon the glass. Wildly he runs to another mirror, and another, with the same result; then turns for comfort to Nicklaus, who begs him to come away before he loses his soul as well. Hoffmann, however, is in love. With or without a reflection he prefers to stay near his

beautiful mistress. He begins amorously a delightful ensemble in which Giulietta adds a word that much as she loves him, she prefers the large diamond ring: Dapertutto and his *protégé*, Pitichinnaccio, sing of the lady's only true love, herself; and Schlemil gasps out his desire to exterminate his rival without delay.

Gondoliers break in upon this with their chant, and Giulietta hints to the assembly that the time for breaking up the party has arrived. All go off but Nicklause, Hoffmann, who stands gazing raptly after the vampire, and Schlemil; while Dapertutto hovers menacingly in the background. Suddenly Hoffmann perceives his rival, and without preamble demands a certain little key from Schlemil. "Come and get it!" suggests Schlemil ferociously. Dapertutto thoughtfully provides the poet with a sword and they fight, with instant and fatal result for Schlemil. Hoffmann with small respect for the dead, relieves him of the key in his vest pocket and dashes off to the house of Giulietta, only to return breathlessly in a moment. The bird has flown! Now down the canal we hear the strains of the *Barcarolle* again, and Giulietta comes in at the rear reclining in a most realistic gondola. Hoffmann very naturally rushes to her to show his key, but Pitichinnaccio is ahead of him, evidently by agreement, and now sinks contentedly in Giulietta's arms as the gondola pushes away to the tune of the lady's heartless laughter.

Hoffmann is stunned for a moment, then enraged, but there is no time for sentiment of any kind. "Here come the police!" cries Nicklause, pulling him off just in time, as the curtain falls.

ACT III has a tinge of pathos which has been lacking from all the other episodes. We are in Munich, at the home of Crespel, evidently a musician, for violins and other instruments are prominent all about the room. There is a wide window showing through the curtains the last of the sunset glow, and conspicuous on the wall is one of those property portraits which, by a strange webbiness, always tells the practiced eye that before the scene is over, it will come to life.

Seated at a clavichord is a demure little figure, sadly fingering the keys and singing a plaintive lay. This is Antonia, whose artistic soul is housed in a body of picturesque fragility. Her song seems to exhaust her, for she drops wearily into a chair, as Crespel, her father, enters followed by Franz, his servant. The old gentleman is distressed at her disobedience, for he has, on the doctor's orders, forbidden her to tax her vocal cords any more. She excuses her behavior on the ground that it was the spirit of

her mother in her . . . her mother the singer, and she looks up at the misty portrait on the wall and then goes sadly out. Crespel is concerned because he has seen two hectic spots in her cheeks, and he lays all the trouble to Hoffmann who has inflamed her girlish imagination. Franz is forbidden to allow any one to enter the house, and as he shows little attention and is very deaf, is shouted at until he answers. An impertinent and ridiculous fellow he is, rather reminiscent of Andres and Cochinille. When he is left alone he admires his reflection in a mirror and does an absurd *pas seul*, in order to admire the shape of his own leg.

His pirouettes are interrupted by the entrance of Hoffmann and the inevitable Nicklaue, who shout at him until they attract his attention. The poet has come to see Antonia, his latest flame. When he learns that Papa is out, he sits down at the clavichord and plays a bar or two, which quickly brings the doting, tremulous girl to his side. Nicklaue, observing sagely that two are company, three a crowd, exits swiftly leaving the lovers to sing an entrancing, melodious duet in which they agree to marry without delay. Hoffmann is only jealous of Music which he fears the gentle creature loves better than she loves him, but she says he must not forbid her to sing as has her father, and again they sing together the *Song of Love*. Scarcely is it finished, however, than the poor girl finds the effort has been too violent. According to the stage directions, she puts her hand on her heart several times, to the great concern of Hoffmann, who suspects that she is not as well as she says. Voices outside send her scampering away, and Hoffmann hides in order to hear what he can in explanation of his sweetheart's condition. Crespel enters, thinking he heard some one, followed by the deaf Franz, who announces Dr. Miracle. It is easily seen that Crespel does not love this particular M. D., and small wonder, for we observe when he enters that he is an unpleasant, reptilian sort of individual, with a sneaking resemblance to Coppélius, Dapertutto and Lindorf. The very way he enters is objectionable. He comes through no door or window, like a normal person, no—he simply is suddenly there!

Franz runs away, and he has our sympathy, for now the terrible doctor is laughing with diabolical chuckles. He greets Crespel pleasantly enough, and begins at once to discuss the health of Antonia. He would like to question her personally in order to diagnose her case, which seems reasonable, but the father, frozen with some unknown terror, forbids him.

"Oh, very well," says Miracle, "there are other ways!" So saying he seats himself at the clavichord, plays a few bars and sings

a few words and makes a few sinister passes with his hands. Crespel, and Hoffmann in his hiding-place, shake with terror. No wonder! The door of Antonia's room suddenly opens and, although we see no one come out, Miracle apparently does, for he goes to meet an invisible somebody, conducts her graciously to a chair and proceeds to hold a one-sided conversation, feeling an imaginary pulse and clucking with concern. Then, "Sing!" he commands. "No!" shrieks the anxious parent, but the voice of Antonia from within is clearly heard. Miracle is satisfied, he conducts his invisible patient back to her room, and the door shuts of itself (although you may be interested to know that a conscientious embryo conductor behind the scenes, with a large score in his nervous hands, has pulled it to on just the correct beat).

Dr. Miracle now wishes to give Crespel some medicine for his daughter. He has an annoying way of clicking the little vials together in his hands like castanets, and Crespel will have none of him, nor his drugs. He invites him forcibly to depart, which the slippery gentleman does. Still talking and without interrupting his sentences at all, he promptly walks in again through the wall. Once more he is despatched, but he walks leisurely out backward, clicking his nasty little bottles to the last.

Hoffmann is now left alone and realizes at last why his sweetheart must not sing again—they said she had consumption. The sorrow is almost too great for him. But while he sighs, the gentle girl appears to question him about what he heard and he pretends great hurry, if they are to elope in the morning, and rushes out. Antonia watches him from the window, then sadly turning around confronts, with surprise, the horrid doctor come back somehow without visible entrance. Now he begins his mischief, although what his motive is it would be difficult to say. He reminds the ardent girl of the joys of music, and the folly of renouncing them for earthly love. How much better will be the plaudits of the crowded opera house than the clinging hands of a dozen squalling brats!

"Do not tempt me!" the poor girl begs; but the wicked creature then hints at the infidelity of her lover, and characteristically disappears before she can resent it. Poor Antonia looks up at her mother's portrait and sobs a little. Dr. Miracle, with another sinister idea, returns inexplicably to stand at her ear and urge her to invoke her mother, and even as he speaks, the portrait lights up as we had suspected all along that it would, and a human lady looks out and murmurs, "Antonia!" Of course Dr. Miracle is responsible for this vision, for this unnatural parent urges her child

to ignore advice and go on singing as much as she wishes and to begin at once. Dr. Miracle snatches a violin from the wall and begins to play a mad accompaniment as the hysterical girl tries to obey. She gasps and struggles for breath; but urged on by the vision and by the doctor's fiendish playing, she works herself up into a passionate frenzy, from which a sudden demise mercifully releases her. As she falls back lifeless to the couch, Dr. Miracle sinks conveniently through the floor, laughing in horrid glee, while the frantic Hoffmann and the heartbroken parent rush in. Crespel in his sorrow blames Hoffmann for the tragedy and would attack him but for Nicklaus's practical suggestion of calling in a real doctor. At this word Miracle bobs up for the last time, saying amiably, "Present!" and feeling the girl's pulse, pronounces her dead with great satisfaction. The curtain descends upon the cries and lamentations of the entire household.

The Epilogue takes us back to the wine cellar of Luther's tavern, where all are grouped exactly as when the curtain fell on the Prologue. Hoffmann has just finished his extraordinary recital. Lindorf is the first to go off to keep the assignation with Stella, about whom at this moment one of the students inquires. Nicklaus replies for Hoffmann. "Why, of course, Stella is all three, Olympia, Giulietta, Antonia—that is why Hoffmann adores her. Why not drink to the lady?" But Hoffmann is temperamental, he breaks his glass rather than drink the toast; no more love for him, but drink, hard drink—that's the stuff! So they take up their merry chorus, and all jostle out, leaving the poet in a heavy stupor. Through the fumes of wine he now sees a lady who professes to be the Muse and who suggests very sensibly that he devote himself to her for a while with more profit than to the other frail women he has been dallying with. She does not linger long, but she makes her impression, and Hoffmann acknowledges drunkenly before he succumbs to drowsiness that there is something in what she has said and that he will embrace her straightway; but he falls on his face on the table instead. Suddenly the door opens and the notorious Stella, with Lindorf, Nicklaus and all the students enter. She looks at her late lover rather tenderly and covers him with his cloak. "He sleeps!" she sighs. "No, Madame, dead drunk!" states the matter-of-fact Nicklaus, mounting guard over her friend, while the students clink their glasses and strike up their song again, and Stella goes off on Lindorf's arm, as the curtain falls,

TANNHÄUSER

By RICHARD WAGNER

First Produced in Dresden, 1845

THIS opera, like *Lohengrin*, belongs to the earlier period of Wagner's works. It met with a storm of criticism when first given, and it was many years before it gained the strong position it now holds in the répertoire of every important opera house. The score was censored for its absence of melody, which, in the light of our modern appreciation for such excerpts as the *Pilgrims' Chorus*, the *Festival March*, the *Song to the Evening Star*, seems absurd. There is a richness in the orchestral score of the opera which is little short of magic, and the use of Wagner's pet theory, the "leading motives," has increased and is more skillfully worked out than in any previous work.

The theme of the opera is simple—the old struggle between Sacred and Profane Love. If *Lohengrin* can be said to depict the earth struggles of Woman's soul, *Tannhäuser* may be considered the chronicle of Man, his spiritual dreams and his aspirations, his feet held to earth by his physical nature. The orchestral prelude, one of the longest in all music, is an epitome of this struggle, woven mainly of the great themes which we are to hear in the body of the opera. The sonorous *Pilgrims' Chorus*—man's spiritual nature—is replaced by the fantastic sensuality of the Pagan Venus' music which in turn finally gives way to the Pilgrims again, or "redemption through intercession."

The curtain rises on the interior of the Horsel Mountain in Thuringia, whither Venus and her court retired when Christianity made the residence of the Gods upon Olympus too uncomfortable. The grotto is a delightful spot for those who like that sort of thing. The air is full of perfume, rosy mists, and amusing little cupids. Exotic flowers of enormous size bloom everywhere, ravishing music sounds from hidden instruments, sirens sing from the shores of a jeweled lake in the background, wherein naiads disport themselves. Everywhere beautiful femininity postures and

smiles. Venus herself, the Queen of Beauty, reclines in classic repose upon a couch of sea-shells, serene in her power, and enjoying the efforts of the Three Graces and others who are performing for her delectation and that of the knight. Tannhäuser reclines at her feet. Neither the antics of the faun-ballet, nor the spectacle of Leda and her swan, nor of Europa seated in majesty upon her bull, seems to interest him any more. He has been here a year, held by the bondage of voluptuous delights, but now as he lies looking with lackluster eye at the blandishments on display, his thoughts have gone back to the world of mingled sorrow and joy. He becomes suddenly surfeited with pleasure; he is homesick.

Venus, noting a strange absence of ardor, leans over him in apprehension. What new delights can she offer to divert him? With a petulant gesture he throws off her clinging hands, and gives voice to his longing to behold a few trees and green meadows, not this everlasting *pink*—to breathe clear air from the mountains, unburdened by perfume—to hear pastoral bells instead of this infernal singing and harping. Venus is all concern. She reminds him of the thorns among the roses of earth; but he is sick of flowery beds of ease. She commands him to sing the song which she has taught him, a hymn to her own beauty, and thrusts his harp into his hands. This, at least, is action! Tannhäuser lifts his voice in delight with the swinging pagan measures—the magic of the words and music have almost ensnared him again for a moment, as Venus hoped it would. But the mood passes. Once more he wishes to go. There is no fury like a woman scorned! Venus cajoles, entreats, spreads further scenes of temptation and pleasure before his eyes, all in vain, then unleashes her anger. He may go—far be it from her to hold a reluctant lover—but may he soon regret his rash impulse and pound forever on her locked gates! Then, like all clever women, swiftly changing her mood, she becomes once more the seductress, while sirens' voices sound from the distance, vibrant with potent charm. All her efforts, however, are in vain, when this stubborn male has made up his mind. In his distress he calls upon the Virgin Mary, and in a crashing moment of screams and darkness, the miracle is accomplished.

When the stage is light again, Tannhäuser is still upon his knees, and all his wishes have come true. He is in a lovely valley, green with the freshness of a spring morning. Above him towers the Wartburg, the Hall of Song, while at a great and safe distance is the Horselberg. Bells are heard—sheep bells, and a merry shepherd boy on a bank above him plays a skirling little tune on his pipe as he sings in praise of spring, while down the

hill to the right, by the Virgin's shrine, a band of elderly pilgrims, bound for Rome, come in slow and dignified procession. The shepherd waves his cap at them and disappears, but Tannhäuser only stares in wonder and awe. He is crushed by the thought of his year of sin, and vows that he will expiate all, before he takes his place in the world.

Hardly has the pilgrims' chant grown faint and the bells tinkled away before another sound greets our ears—the horns of hunters, and all at once the stage is full of knights in the then-fashionable hunting clothes of velvet, fur, and peaked caps, led by Landgrave Hermann of the Wartburg. They swing their boar-spears and sing gayly on their homeward way. One of their number, the worthy Wolfram von Eschenbach, suddenly recognizes in the wanderer, his friend, Heinrich Tannhäuser, who has been so long absent from their midst. Pleasantly excited and hospitable, the Landgrave and the others greet him warmly, and urge him to the castle, but he refuses—he has duties to perform. But when Wolfram gently alludes to the beautiful and saintly Elizabeth, niece of the Landgrave, who has languished all the time of his absence, never even setting foot in the famous Hall of Song since he disappeared, Tannhäuser is greatly moved and cannot resist seeing her again. The men's voices join in a *septet* of sturdy beauty, and from far and near the servants of the hunt foregather. Pages bearing hooded falcons run in, horses paw the ground, and a new chorus not written into the score is added by the excited barking of a pack of chained beagles. In a pleasing bustle all move toward the castle as the curtain falls.

ACT II. Here we behold the historic hall of the Wartburg, where the Minnesingers of the Middle Ages always held their amazing tournaments of song. The stage is empty for a moment, then on a theme of exuberant joy there enters the saintly young Elizabeth. She is dressed with much richness in the heavy robes and crown then worn by patrician womankind, and her pure and lovely face is aglow with much radiance. Smiling up at the painted walls and vaulted ceiling, she flings wide her arms in stately greeting and sings that brilliant aria, "*Hail, beloved Hall!*" known to every dramatic soprano's repertoire. There is a sweep and uplift to the opening bars which, contrasted with the quieter phrases in which tenderly she reviews her last dear memories of this place, is poignantly moving. In the last stanzas she returns to the exultant mood and stops to behold, just entering the doorway, the very object of her dreams—Tannhäuser himself, brushed

and combed and looking very splendid, accompanied by his friend Wolfram. The latter tactfully remains in the background, but the impetuous Heinrich throws himself passionately at the feet of his lady. Graciously she bids him rise, and asks a little shyly about his travels. He replies as he did to the knights—that he has escaped from strange and distant lands. Then looking into his dear face she lets herself go a little and they sing earnestly and joyfully of their mutual love.

Wolfram, in the background, dwells a little pitifully on his own love for Elizabeth and his unselfish yielding to his friend's stronger claim.

The moment has come for the contest in honor of Tannhäuser's return. The two men leave, and the Landgrave, also dressed with care and elegance, enters and expresses his satisfaction that his beautiful niece is once more with him to do the honors. He slyly alludes the state of her affections, but observing that she is too in earnest for teasing, does not question her further—besides, his duties as host begin to press. To the vigorous and tuneful measures of the *Festival March* the guests appear. Elizabeth, very dignified and graciously polite, takes her place beside him, and with their backs to the audience they receive the crowds of nobles and ladies who crowd through the doors. Pages are kept busy escorting the guests in by twos and fours. Every one is there, dignitaries of Church and State, Crusaders, young men and maidens, old men and great dames. At one time the Landgrave gives a special personal welcome to a neighboring baron—at another Elizabeth forgets her dignity for a moment to run forward and meet a bevy of her girl friends, or again she sweetly leaves her place to greet and escort to her chair an elderly Duchess. At last every one has arrived, the serried amphitheater has every bench full, and all are singing with open throats to the continued strains of the march, their joy and gratification at being invited to such an interesting event. The Landgrave, taking his niece's hand, then walks very grandly before them all, bows, and retires to the double throne on a raised dais at the right.

Now the doors open and pages in motley run forward with the benches for the contestants, then stand expectantly, each holding his Master's harp. To ceremonial strains the Minnesingers now enter, and Elizabeth cannot control a start of pleasure as Tannhäuser, among the others, bows and takes his place. The Landgrave then rises and makes a more or less dull speech of welcome, in which he reviews other contests and the history of the same, and at last, to every one's relief, announces that the

chosen subject for this debate shall be Love, and the prize whatever the victor chooses to claim from the hand of Elizabeth. Four pages, strutting with importance, collect the names of the singers in a golden vase and present it to Elizabeth, who draws forth a slip. The head page reads it, confers with the others, and then their great moment having come, they sing anxiously, "*Wolfram von Eschenbach—begin!*" and sit with relief upon the dais steps.

Wolfram, taking up his little harp and strumming a tentative chord or two, must have had some inkling of the subject to be chosen, for with scarcely an instant's hesitation he gives tongue to long, measured, and decorous sentiments. They are beautiful in the quiet, virtuous, estimable and dull way in which Wolfram himself is worthy. Tannhäuser, at first *distracted* and dreamy, gradually takes an impatient interest in his friend's trite remarks. What perfect nonsense the man is singing! This serene and pallid affair he describes is not love. He, Tannhäuser, knows whereof he speaks! Rather rudely he interrupts with his views. Then Walther von der Vogelweide (all these gentlemen are historical characters) takes up the challenge in support of Wolfram. All the conventional people in the audience applaud, this is the correct thing, it should be supported! Only Elizabeth, in her pure mind recognizing no evil, is enthusiastic over her lover's warmth of expression—she cannot know as we do—informed by the orchestra toying with the *Venusberg* motif—of his shocking thoughts. Again he interrupts Walther to tell him rudely that he does not know what he is talking about. Biterolf, another contestant, grows angry at all this breach of etiquette; he resents Tannhäuser's allusions and twangs his harp angrily. The gallery applauds such righteous sentiments, but Tannhäuser, by now thoroughly aroused by the stupidity and ignorance of his brother singers, and half mad with his own memories, so far forgets himself as to rise and sing with vigorous indiscretion the shocking hymn to sensual gratification taught him by Venus herself. The words scorch and crackle, the pagan music raises the hairs on the virtuous knights' heads—they finger their swords nervously, glancing at their wives from the tails of their uneasy eyes. Now Tannhäuser has worked himself into a foolish frenzy. Losing his head completely, in a rash gesture he invites the whole assembly to meet him in *Venusberg!*

This is too much—even the gentle Landgrave cannot stand for this! The women and young pages scuttle away like frightened chickens and the men advance on the heretic with drawn swords. Only Elizabeth, of all the women, has had courage to remain,

and now she rouses herself from her frozen horror to interpose her beautiful person between her lover and death. The nobles, who have been accustomed to regard her as somewhat of a saint, retire before the mystic light in her eyes, and her pitiful words that she will intercede for the sinner with her life. Tannhäuser, abject, prostrate with the enormity of the thing he has done, can only crawl to her and kiss the hem of her garment. She looks at him in great sorrow and forgiveness, but already the halo of renunciation and withdrawal shines about her lovely head. Through the open window drift the distant voices of some young pilgrims going to join their elders who started that morning. The Landgrave has an inspiration. Tannhäuser shall join their band and expiate his sins in the rigors of the journey and confession to the Pope!

Tannhäuser eagerly grasps at the suggestion. With one heart-breaking look of farewell to Elizabeth, who is almost swooning against the throne, he rushes from the hall, and the knights sheathe their swords as the curtain falls.

ACT III. A short instrumental prelude suggesting memories of the *Pilgrims' Chorus* and the great *Hope of Pardon* which we just heard in the last act, introduces the final scene. Once more the wayside shrine in the valley of the Wartburg, a valley no longer clad in the joyousness of springtime. Now autumn, death, and decay are in the air. Dry leaves flutter from the dark trees, and early twilight clothes the world in gloom. Prostrate at the foot of the shrine lies Elizabeth, as though fallen exhausted from long praying. Faithful Wolfram comes in through the forest path and regards her gravely and sadly. His love for her is true and strong, but she wastes her young strength upon petitions for the redemption of the absent Tannhäuser. Wolfram muses that the day for the pilgrims' return is near, and as though in answer to his thought the first faint notes of their approach are heard. Nearer they come! Wolfram steps aside to await them and Elizabeth lifts her drooping head in an attitude of hope. Nearer they come! Soon all the stage is filled with the resonance of their voices, as two by two, dusty, footsore, travel-stained, but vocally vigorous, they salute the Virgin and pass on.

Elizabeth, tremulously clinging to the cross, peers eagerly, hopefully, into each face, and as the end of the column approaches a great despair settles upon her features; her face in its narrow coif of white seems to shrink and age before our eyes. They have gone on and her dear Heinrich is not with them! She can hope

no more—it is the end! She has only to commit her soul to Heaven—her unhappy life is drained. Flinging herself once more at the feet of the Image she sings her quiet prayer of unearthly beauty, *All-Powerful Virgin*. With long-drawn-out phrases of a saintly serenity and renunciation she raises her petition for the final redemption of Tannhäuser, and for the admission of her own soul to the next world without delay. At last, spent and utterly weary, she drags herself to her feet, and trailing her long draperies, heavy step after heavy step begins to mount the steep path toward the castle. Poor Wolfram, his heart bursting with sympathy, springs forward to help her, but with upraised hand and a far-away look, as though already her eyes are beholding Cherubim and Seraphim, she shows him that she has passed beyond the need of earthly help. So she goes her way alone, and Wolfram with heavy heart sits down upon the bank to brood.

Suddenly the bright evening star breaks through a heavy bank of clouds, like a good omen, and Wolfram, in a passion of longing and ardor, takes up his trusty harp which is always at hand, and after a short prelude obligingly performed by the orchestral instrument, sings his *Hymn to the Evening Star*. Nothing lovelier exists among baritone solos. Heard in the blazing concert hall, it never fails to grip the heart, but here in its own legitimate and romantic setting it is a thing to be remembered for a lifetime. Hardly have the last mellow notes died away than through the deepening dusk a tattered and unkempt figure staggers in leaning heavily upon a pilgrim staff. Wolfram's friendly eyes penetrate the disguise. It is Tannhäuser—sadly changed by emaciation and despair. He accosts him, but Heinrich is obsessed by one idea, to get back to the *Venusberg* and oblivion as quickly as possible. Does Wolfram know the way? The good soul is horrified! What about Rome, and the Pope's pardon—did Tannhäuser never reach there?

Bitterly the weary man, to the accompaniment of sorrow and despair in the orchestra, relates that among all the thousands seeking pardon, the Pope refused it only to *his* sin, bidding him hope only when the Pontifical staff should burst into leaf. In other words, *never!* Therefore let him get to Venus without delay; she at least will be kind! The orchestra hints, by suggestions of the sirens' songs and the *Venusberg motif*, that the lady herself is not far away, and sure enough, borne on a rosy cloud and surrounded by her omnipresent dancers, she appears in answer to his desire. "Come back, faithless love!" she entreats, reaching out her luscious arms toward him, and Tannhäuser would rush

to her but for Wolfram, who restrains him with desperate strength. The disillusioned Tannhäuser will listen to no reason until his friend speaks of an angel already on her knees before the throne of Heaven in prayer for him—the lately, very lately, departed Saint Elizabeth. The potency of her name, as always, recalls him. Venus in a baffled rage shrieks and disappears.

Descending the dark path now come pilgrims bearing Elizabeth on her bier, followed by the sorrowing Landgrave and his household. Tannhäuser has just strength enough to crawl to it, and die at the foot of his saint.

But stay a moment! This is not all. A great surprise is at hand, for excited pilgrims rush in agog with the wonder of the thing they bear in their midst—the venerable staff of the Pope, putting forth buds and flowers like a hedge in springtime. Tannhäuser is redeemed—too late—but no—we all know, for the orchestra insists in broad religious phrases, that his soul is joining Elizabeth's and singing with the Heavenly Host.

The curtain.

THAÏS

By JULES MASSENET

First sung in Paris, 1894

"THAÏS," as an opera, holds a few lovely arias, one very famous instrumental number, and a great deal of rather sentimental music that is fairly arid of inspiration; but as a spectacle to divert, especially the masculine eye, it is to be recommended, and as a vehicle for the prima donna of physical as well as vocal charm, it is unequaled. Opera- and even field-glasses are in constant demand. As to the moral lesson of the story, the conclusion is unfortunate in some of its aspects, but the plot is of intense emotional appeal throughout its unfolding.

The first act is in two scenes. When the curtain rises we see a group of Cenobite monks at their humble evening meal outside their cells on the banks of the Nile in Thebes. It is sunset, and the sands of the desert still glow, while the palm-trees cast a deep shadow over the twelve men. Palemon, the father superior, rises and asks God's blessing on the food, which is frugal enough—bread, water, salt, fruit. The brothers reply antiphonally and Palemon adds a prayer that Brother Athanaël, whose place is empty, may soon return, "clothed in the might of the Lord." He adds that he feels sure he is at hand, as he has seen him in a dream. The brothers discuss the matter and politely pass each other the bread and the salt.

Almost immediately Athanaël is seen approaching, apparently weary in body and low in spirit. They salute him and urge him to eat and drink, but he has no appetite, he is too upset by what he has seen in the city. All of Alexandria is gone mad in revelry and sin, and one woman, Thaïs, leads them all to Hell. The monks are curious about such a woman, and Athanaël explains that she is an actress, a courtesan, and a priestess of the temple of Venus. When he was a boy, before he embraced religion, he knew her and one terrible day he was lured as far as the gate of her house, but God allowed him to escape without sin, and that day he took refuge among the holy men of the desert. Now

the wickedness which he has found surrounding Thaïs almost suffocates him. He longs to save her soul.

Palemon, ever on the side of discretion, and with total absence of missionary zeal, advises him to keep out of the world's affairs, and sensibly suggests that as night is falling they pray and go to bed. Docilely the monks, although doubtless eager to hear more of Thaïs and her machinations, obey, and chanting, enter their cells. Athanäel, however, cannot stand the closeness of his cubicle, and lies down outside on a mat, his head on a neck-breaking wooden rest. The sights and sounds of the desert fade away. All is as somber and restrained as the quiet orchestra. Then suddenly upon the monk's tortured brain flashes a vision, which we are also permitted to view. It is the great amphitheater of Alexandria, crowded tier on tier with enthusiasts who shout and applaud as Thaïs, on the stage above their heads, poses in the "Loves of Aphrodite" and reveals her beauty in semi-nudity. She bends and sways toward the climax of the dance, the spectators call her name, and just at the interesting moment the vision fades, the orchestra dripping dreamlike harmonies.

Shocked and dismayed, Athanäel starts up, to see dawn already in the sky. Flinging himself on his face with shame, he prays that God will move him by pity and love to save the scarlet soul of Thaïs; and then calling to his brothers to awake, he tells them he has been bidden in a dream to return to the city of vice and snatch a brand from the burning. Palemon consents, and speeds him on, although still advocating the policy of non-interference. But Athanäel is fired with the zeal of the Crusaders, and stalks away determinedly, chanting his prayers, to which the humble brothers reply as long as they can hear his voice.

In the next scene Athanäel has arrived, as the orchestra, attempting to describe Alexandria, tells us, and is standing rather dubiously on the terrace before the house of Nicias, a boyhood friend who has since strayed far upon the broad and flowery path. Nicias lives in a veritable palace, the richness of the hangings before his banquet hall testifying extravagance. An insolent servant, eyeing the haggard monk, attempts to drive him off, but Athanäel has a quiet, terrible dignity which puts the man in his place, and he goes obediently to announce him. Left alone, the monk looks down at the city, and curses it for a seething cauldron of iniquity, calling on the angels of God to fan its infested breezes clean with their wings. In contrast to the broad phrases of his anathema, silly laughing voices are heard, and Nicias, well fed, rubicund, ridiculous in ruffled toga and wreath of flowers, comes gayly on

the scene, a fair young slave on each arm. Recognizing his old friend, he releases the girls and hurries to welcome Athanäel, who he hopes has at last shown some intelligence and left the monastery. When he hears it is only for a day, however, and for the purpose, in that short time, of converting Thaïs, he is skeptical. As it happens, she belongs to him this week, he having pawned his last acre to secure her, but she is hard and light and brittle, she has no heart, and besides she is a priestess of Venus. Athänael will only be wasting time and strength.

Athanäel is not in the least discouraged; he welcomes a struggle and only asks Nicias' help in bringing about a meeting. Nicias falls in with the plan and decides to array his monastic friend in purple and fine linen for the evening's revelries, which Thaïs is to attend. Hugely enjoying their duties, four slave girls proceed to transform the startled, protesting monk. A wonderful coat, golden sandals, oil and a comb for his ragged beard, perfume for his fingers and cheeks, rings, bracelets, necklaces! Only the hair shirt retained beneath this worldly exterior comforts the stricken man, while the mischievous girls tease him and flatter him, and revel in his discomfort. Athanäel stares stonily before him, as though submitting to torture.

Acclamations from outside announce an arrival of importance, and presently borne in on a human tide of dancing, singing neophytes, arrives the notorious Thaïs. When Miss Garden first made her entrance she tossed into the air great armfuls of real red roses, which fell about her with stunning effect. Thaïs is very beautiful, very blond, very devastating. The fires of her allure already scorch and crackle before the eyes of the Anchorite. Thaïs is not used to a specter at her feasts; she asks the amorous Nicias the name of the solemn guest, and he warns her that he has chosen her for a victim of his fanaticism. Thaïs isn't afraid—to her jaded appetite this has a new spice. As Athanäel detaches himself from a group of his friends and comes toward her with burning words of reproach, she is for a moment angry at his effrontery, then suddenly smiles beguilingly at him and confesses interest—not in his gospel, however—only in his wonderful eyes, made for love—not for praying. What does he preach when he knows so little of life? If he will sit beside her she will teach him the first principles, she will crown him with roses. Athanäel shudders, repelled and bewildered. This is not the place for his sermons, he has sense enough to know, but he promises Thaïs in inspired tones that he will come to her in her palace and there win her soul for God.

"It will be very interesting to see you try it. One does not lightly violate the temple of Venus!" As a challenge, she be-thinks herself of her recent performance of Aphrodite—she will test him. Letting fall her concealing cloak she stands before them, revealed in all the scantily adorned seductiveness of her Pagan rôle. The guests shout with delight, but poor Athanäel has seen too much for his good. With a cry of horror, he flees, while the crowd mocks and laughs delightedly at his discomfiture.

The curtain falls.

ACT II. A short interlude reminiscent of the "Loves of Aphrodite" prefaces the act, which takes us to the boudoir of Thaïs. It is a classic apartment, with a brazier or two, a couch, screens and curtains, but a general absence of coziness. Thaïs enters, followed by her eager sycophants, but she is weary of them and sends them away in short order. Alone, she gives voice to her general discontent and the staleness of her pleasures. She has, however, one certain panacea for all troubles, the contemplation of her own beauty. Eagerly she seizes her bit of polished steel which serves for a mirror, and throwing herself upon her back on the leopard skin couch, she sings in lovely strains to the reflected image. But even this pleasure is darkened by some sinister shadow. She demands of her beauty that it stay with her forever, and yet reads there that some day the rose skin will be wrinkled, the scarlet lips sagging, the veiled and lovely eyes, sunken. Horrible! Vainly she cries to Venus to spare her such a fate.

She is answered by the sudden apparition of Athanäel in the entrance. Diverted, she runs to meet him, all gracious warmth, and radiance. The monk is quite aware that he is not charm-proof, and before entering breathes a prayer that God will defend him from her blandishments. She invites him in, hanging upon his utterances, and when he says that because of her matchless charm among women his victory over her will be all the greater, Thaïs replies that he is too proud—let him beware lest he fall in love with her himself! Ah, yes, Athanäel has love for her, but not the love she knows—a love of delights and joys she knows not of, that last to eternity. Thaïs thinks this funny, but she is willing to be taught. Of course there will be kisses—they are the only gateway of love. She leans toward him, but Athanäel stands rigid, rebuking her for her frivolity, and insisting on the beauty of a love which means renunciation and abnegation. She does not know of what he speaks. "Imagine!" scoffs Thaïs. "I have

sampled every sort of love under the sun—you are rather late!" "Your sort of love breeds only shame," reproves Athanäel, having a very stiff time, but still stern. More and more earnest, more zealous, more ardent he becomes. "Very well, teach me, I am yours!" she cries, and turns casually to fling a grain of incense on the altar of Venus.

Athanäel, with tortured flesh, is almost at the end of his endurance, and the clever woman knows it. His frantic prayers are answered, however, and for a moment her alluring face is veiled from him by the incense fumes. To her pagan chant he utters his Christian canticles, and when she turns back toward him in all the glory of her yielding beauty he impulsively tears off his robe and jewels and stands before her as the ascetic monk of the desert. With majestic fire and holy calm he announces his identity and his mission. Thaïs is shaken for once from her careless gayety. Falling at his feet in terror, she begs for mercy—begs that his accusing voice cease, that he leave her in peace. She cannot help being beautiful, she has never hurt any one—she fears death so! Athanäel, moved by her abjectness, reassures her. Again he tells her of the joy in the eternal life he offers.

Now Thaïs is listening, wide-eyed. The monk has hypnotized her—she is in a dazed trance, broken by the voice of Nicias outside, who is coming to her singing gayly of love—one last night of love.

"Love!" she cries distractedly. "What does that fool know of its meaning?"

"Are you listening?" persists Athanäel, fixing his blazing eyes on hers.

"Yes, yes." But he must leave her—quickly, and he may tell Nicias if he likes that she hates him and all of his kind.

"I shall wait on your threshold for you, through the night!" Athanäel insists. But Thaïs, unnerved, hysterical, flings herself upon her couch laughing and sobbing together, "No, I shall always be Thaïs, Thaïs the Courtesan. I believe in nothing—no one—neither God nor man!"

Athanäel, grimly pleased with the havoc he has wrought, goes off as the curtain falls.

Between this scene and the next will be played the famous *Intermezzo* or *Meditation*, a sentimentally religious melody for violin and harps, of great beauty and appeal, the strains of which will later reappear in the uplifted moments of Thaïs' confession.

The curtain parts to show Athanäel at his vigil on the doorstep. High revelry is being held in the adjoining house of Nicias,

the sounds of music and laughter drift through the windows, but in the square it is dark, save for the tiny lamp burning before an ivory statue of Cupid, on Thaïs' portico. Suddenly she appears, but what a changed Thaïs! Gone is the paint from her face, the shining garments, the jewels, the brilliant gayety. Dressed in a simple linen tunic, a gray veil over her flowing parted hair, she is a picture of gentle submissiveness and penitence, and ten times lovelier than before. She lifts the lamp above her head and peers out, then seeing Athanâel, hastens to him. Radiant with quiet joy she tells him that God has spoken to her at last. After a night of tears and meditation, she is ready to do as he bids her.

Athanâel, exultant, tells her of the group of pious nuns not far away, presided over by the patrician lady, Albine, where she can find peace and sanctuary. Thaïs, impatient, would set out at once, but Athanâel, in the rigor of his zeal, is very severe with his convert. Before she leaves, all traces of her former life—her palace and all it contains—must be wiped out. In her new humility she gently consents and as she goes inside to do his bidding she sees the little image of Cupid. Then follows one of the most appealing incidents of the opera. Pathetically she begs to take the pretty thing with her. Love—there is no sin in love—sin is only in the betrayal and mockery of love. May she please take this one thing with her? It would be a happiness to do so. Athanâel, brutally lacking in comprehension, dashes the image to a thousand bits upon the pavement. Even this cannot shake Thaïs' new docility. With bowed head she sadly enters the house with him.

Into the empty square come tumbling Nicias, rather drunk, and his houseful of revelers. His luck at the games has filled his pockets again. He will celebrate for them all with the Asiatic dancers. He despatches slaves to summon them. Amid laughter and song and love-making, rugs are laid and the dancers arrive. Presently the square is filled by the rhythmical merriment of a pagan ballet of much charm, while the voices of Myrtale and Crobyle, the two slaves, are raised in the *Canticle of Beauty*.

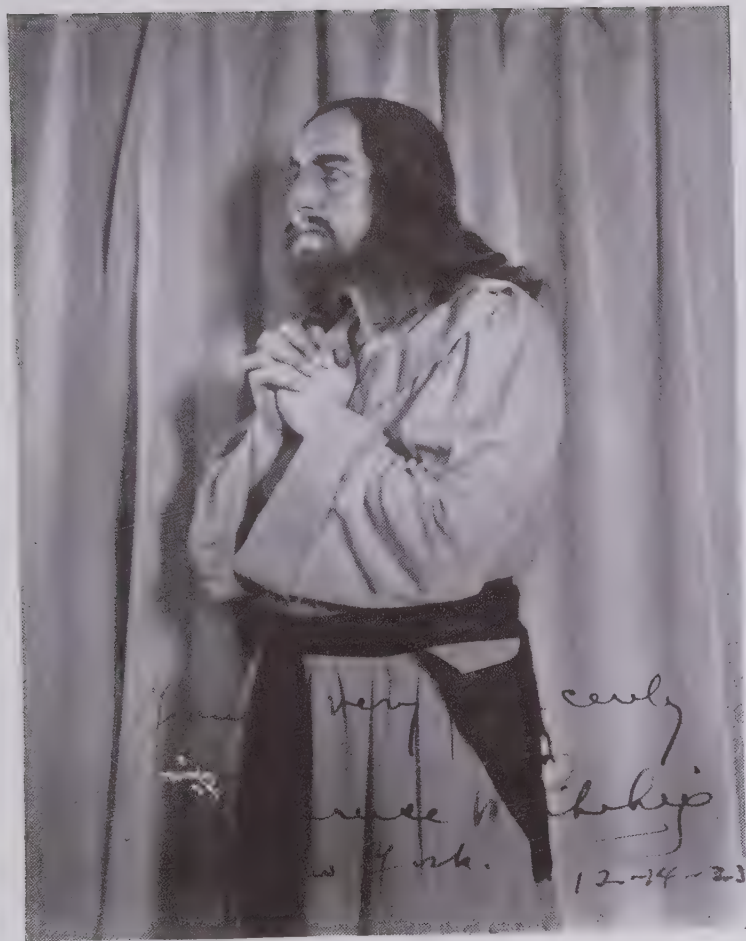
At the conclusion, the inspired figure of Athanâel, holding a lighted torch, appears on the portico of Thaïs' house. The revelers think he has gone mad, the last victim of the Courtesan's wiles, and shout in derision. But Athanâel, ignoring them, holds out his hand to the chastened Thaïs, veiled and barefooted, who descends the stairs with him, followed by her depressed servants. The crowd, suddenly angered by the sight of flames in the palace,

and by the transformation of their beloved idol, fall upon the monk and an unpleasant struggle ensues, in which Athanaël is wounded by a stone, and Thaïs stands quietly exalted, almost hoping to die then. Nicias at last interferes, however, and permits them to escape, singing to the last that he will keep the memory of Thaïs fragrant.

ACT III. So in the final act, Thaïs' soul is saved, but what of the monk? More tormenting than the scratches of his hair shirt is the fragile beauty, the pitiful faith and endurance of the lovely creature who follows him so trustingly. Like many another mortal, he crucifies other flesh in crucifying his own. Although Thaïs is worn and exhausted by the heat of the desert and the long miles of wandering, he urges her pitilessly forward over the sand, crying to her to repent, to expiate, to suffer. Obediently she tries to push on, but at the edge of a little oasis she stumbles and cannot go further. Athanaël leads her to a shady bank and for a moment, relaxing his guard, becomes human, insisting that she rest, and gathering fruit and a cup of water for her. Gratefully she drinks, with the docility of a little child, while he watches her silently. Suddenly he sees that her delicate white feet are bleeding, and heaping reproaches upon himself, he falls to kissing them, and calls her his sister—his saint! Safe words, but not safe emotions for Athanaël! While she eats and drinks he sings to her of the victory God has given him, as though to gather strength by the words, and she humbly joins her voice to his.

Their conversation is interrupted by the sound of chanting and presently a little procession of the White Sisters, headed by Albine, appears on the sand. In a short time Athanaël has explained his mission and given over the beautiful postulant to the Mother Superior. His work is accomplished. Thaïs, aglow with the promise of peace in this new life, gratefully kisses his hand and joins the sisters as they trudge away. "Farewell!" she calls, sweetly, "forever!" The dreadful word echoes in his feverish brain after she is gone. Forever! *Never—never—days—months—years—and never to see her again!* Athanaël had not reckoned with this agony. He falls on his knees as the curtain descends.

In the next scene we again see the Cenobite brethren at their evening meal, and again they ask for Brother Athanaël, and speculate as to his whereabouts. He has never been the same since he returned from Alexandria. The air is heavy with an approaching storm, the monks are restless. Suddenly on their musings Athanaël



CLARENCE WHITEHILL AS ATHANAEL IN *THIS*

comes, but his elastic step is dead, his head is bowed in suffering. The men, awed by his appearance, tactfully withdraw, leaving him with the Superior.

And so Athanäel unleashes his agony in confession. Palemon, knowing the great victory of the soul of Thaïs, is horrified to learn that the victory has been turned to defeat for the monk, that his flesh has tortured his spirit to an extent not to be subjugated by scourge or fasting. He is haunted all day, all night, by thoughts of Thaïs—Thaïs—Thaïs!

In answer to this soul's cry of torment the reverend father seems to find nothing more helpful to say than, "What did I tell you?" and conveniently leaving all to God, he embraces the erring brother and withdraws his futile presence.

Athanäel is exhausted and throws himself upon his bed of straw. At once Thaïs comes to torture him, not Thaïs the penitent, but the seductress in all her robes of shame, looking into his eyes, pleading with him to love, like a man, not like a saint. He starts up, screaming to Satan not to tempt him so, but the vision persists. Thaïs dares him to thwart Venus, and as he writhes in mortal agony, laughs derisively. "Thaïs, come, come!" he screams, and the vision melts, in orchestral souvenirs of their first meeting. Again he sleeps, and once more he dreams. This time it is another picture—a group of white-clad women around a bier—a chant in the air of "Thaïs, a saint, is dying!"

Athanäel starts up with a terrible cry. If Thaïs is dying then where is God, where is Heaven, why is anything? In dreadful haste he rushes off.

The last scene is the confirmation of his vision. Beneath a giant fig-tree in the convent garden, Thaïs, swathed in white, lies upon a couch, still as death in the morning sunlight, while around her the devoted sisters chant the burial psalms. Albine muses gently that weeks of penitence have wasted the frail body, but that Thaïs' soul is saved for glory. Suddenly Athanäel, ragged, unkempt, wild-eyed, bursts upon the peaceful scene, but at sight of the Mother he stops respectfully for her blessing. Albine says doubtless he has been sent to guide Thaïs' soul through the gates of death. Humbly he assents, and approaches the death-bed, the nuns withdrawing around the Superior at some distance and continuing to pray.

At sight of the dying Thaïs, Athanäel runs forward and falls on his knees beside her, but it is no conventional, priestly prayer that he murmurs. It is a heartbroken, human sob—"Thaïs!" She opens her eyes and smiles, wanly. Recognizing him, she

gently recalls his first teachings. Wildly he repudiates all memory but that of her beauty. Fortunately approaching death has closed her ears. She wanders further, recalling all the dear incidents of her conversion, deaf to the earthly dreams he blurts forth unrestrainedly.

We look anxiously at the sisters over by the gate. This is nothing for them to hear! But they are lost in devotion and serene contemplation. The scandalous confessions of Athanäel go on, answered by the exalted visions which Thaïs describes. Finally she sees Heaven opening, with Seraphim to wipe away her tears. The sound of harps—and—with a start of utter joy—"God Himself!"

For Athanäel, however, there is no heaven without Thaïs. Falling to the ground he sobs aloud for mercy and pity, and the kind curtains hide him from us.

LA TOSCA

By GIACOMO PUCCINI

First sung in Rome, 1900

"TOSCA" is first of all a melodrama, colored just highly enough to make it unwise to take one's maiden aunt to a performance. Sardou wrote the play, two librettists cleverly adapted it so that Puccini might paint it even more brilliantly with every thrill known to modern Italian music. The result of this coöperation is positively dangerous. It catches us up, shakes our hearts into our throats, drains our capacity for emotion absolutely dry, then flings us down like squeezed oranges. The title rôle is a rich prize eagerly snatched at by prima donna fingers. The tremendous second act alone would carry even a mediocre singer to triumph, but in the hands of an artist of voice, beauty and dramatic power, there is nothing like it on the stage.

There is no overture, so abstain from the cigarette and demitasse after dinner this evening, for we plunge swiftly into the action.

The three sinister chords which indicate the villain, Scarpia, and all his machinations, accompany the rising curtain. The interior of the church of Sant' Andrea della Valle, in Rome, is revealed. There is no one on the stage. On the left is a platform with an easel, a canvas covered by a cloth, and the usual paraphernalia of a painter, plus a capacious lunch-basket. On the right is the private chapel of the Attavanti family, enclosed by a grill. Center is a holy-water font under a statue of the Madonna, while in the rear is the high altar. This must all be taken in at a glance, for the orchestra is beginning to pant with dread as Angelotti, a political convict, just escaped from the prison of Sant' Angelo, dashes in. He is in a desperate hurry, but pauses long enough to extract a key from somewhere beneath the Madonna's feet, then leaps to the chapel gate and unlocks it with a loud click, disappearing just in time, for the old Sacristan is toddling in from the rear. He is the comic element, as the orchestra

informs us at once, and his buffoonery never fails to amuse even the most conventional audiences. Just now he is chattering about the painter's brushes he has been cleaning, and is suddenly surprised to find himself alone. He thought he heard some one arriving and supposed it to be the artist, but on inspecting the lunch-basket, decides that he was mistaken, as the food remains intact.

Here the *Angelus* rings and he creaks to his knees, mumbling, as Mario Cavaradossi arrives on the scene. He is a gentleman, a painter, a tenor, and the hero of the opera. He puts on the conventional smock, and drawing back the cloth from the picture, proceeds to his work with admirable zeal. We can see his masterpiece, a kneeling Magdalen with flowing yellow hair. He stands admiringly in front of it, apparently liking it better than we do, in fact his emotions overflow in a palpitant solo in which he compares a miniature of his brunette Tosca to the blond charms upon the canvas. But the Sacristan is shocked and querulous over the sudden discovery that the Magdalen obviously resembles the Countess Attavanti, who has recently come often to pray in her chapel. Such painting is unorthodox in the extreme! For a few moments he continues to buzz about, lingers lovingly over the possibilities in the napkin-covered basket, and finally departs, taking his amusing orchestral theme with him.

Back comes Angelotti imprudently venturing into what he supposes to be an empty church. He has a bad moment as he sees the painter, but recovers as he recognizes in him an old friend. Cavaradossi is delighted to see him but is nevertheless exceedingly nervous, and locks all the doors with care before giving ear to Angelotti's tale. The importance of the convict's political status, the details of his flight from prison, win his most ardent enthusiasm. He is just devising means to further the escape when a female voice is heard calling, "Mario! . . . Mario!" The painter recognizes Tosca, her impatience is unmistakable, so Angelotti will have to step back into the chapel for a moment. The luncheon-basket will help while away the time.

Mario then runs to the door and he and the orchestra admit La Tosca. She is an opera-singer, the popular idol of Rome that season. Her beauty is devastating, her figure superb, her elaborate clothes have Paris stamped upon them. As she has just come from a morning rehearsal her taste seems hardly conservative, but the effect is ravishing. She carries a Directoire staff, and an armful of roses, and as she moves across the stage, the orchestra insists upon her *motif*, which fits her like a glove, sweet, imperious, romantic. She is quite frank and ingenuous in her pref-

erence for Mario Cavaradossi over any of her other admirers, and is reasonably insistent that he prove an equal affection. To-day, however, her woman's intuition tells her that she interrupted something, and of course she suspects a rival. Her lover thinks that a kiss will stop her jealous raving, but she puts him off while she says a prayer to the Madonna, and lays all her flowers in the holy-water at the feet of the Image. Mario, to hide his nervousness, becomes very industrious at his easel, but Tosca is still suspicious, she does not like his absent-minded answers to her questions. Just to prove her own power she begins to sing alluringly about their little love-nest in a suburban villa overgrown with flowers. It is a delightful lyric and moves Mario as well as the audience to enthusiasm, while all through it we are amazed to discover a phrase familiarly encountered in "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean," as well as one oddly reminiscent of that plebeian ballad, "Where the Chicken got the Ax,"—this latter persisting throughout the entire opera.

As soon as Mario's throes induced by the song have subsided, he begins again tactfully to urge Tosca's departure, hinting foolishly that he feels like working. But she is not so easily disposed of. She has been staring at his painting, and suddenly sees a great light. It is beyond all doubt the portrait of the Countess Attavanti, of course it was *she* who was here, it is all quite plain! No wonder Mario was nervous! Outrageous! She is working herself up rather thoroughly, but Mario, perhaps not unused to such outbursts of temperament, knows how to soothe her. He protests so ardently that he really never did care for blondes, that black eyes only can move him to ecstasy, that his arguments are convincing, the prima donna melts most charmingly, the skies smile again, and she prepares to go. "However," she adds coyly, "don't forget to make the eyes dark!" and finally trails out on the lilt of her own luscious orchestral theme.

As soon as she is gone, and he assures himself that all is clear, Mario runs back to continue his conversation with Angelotti. The fugitive is out of the chapel again but decidedly uneasy. He divulges his plan to leave the church when it is dark, arrayed in a woman's dress secreted behind the chapel altar by his sister, Countess Attavanti. Here Mario observes with amusement that it was not religious devotion after all which brought his lovely unknown model so often to the church. However he pronounces Angelotti's plan a weak one, Scarpia (here again the three sinister chords), Chief of Roman Police, is a monster of iniquity, a sanctimonious, canting hypocrite, lascivious, unscrupulous and dia-

bolically clever. Few hiding-places are safe from him; but stop—there is an old well in the garden of the villa where he and Tosca repair for their sentimental interludes. Here there is a secret passage to a cave. He will gladly take Angelotti there at the risk of his own head.

Suddenly as they talk, a cannon booms. No need to wonder what that is! The escape has been discovered, and Scarpia is loosing his bloodhounds. . . . The two men leave without ceremony.

Here the orchestra relieves our nerves with a little light comedy, we anticipate the Sacristan. Sure enough, not only the Sacristan but all the domestic force of the church, choir-boys, acolytes and so forth. The old man is quite dizzy with joy, for news has come of Napoleon's defeat. There will be a big celebration at the Farnese Palace to-night, with a *cantata* to be sung by Floria Tosca, and for the present a fine *Te Deum* in the church, with extra pay. The girlish choir-boys caper as boyishly as possible, and the Sacristan tries to drive them off to put on their vestments, but their merry little waltz gets into his own old heels. It is becoming rather noisy, when . . . again come the three wicked chords, and Scarpia himself stands in the door. The choristers scatter like mice, the Sacristan quivers. Behind Scarpia's black magnificence enter his police, nosing about like the bloodhounds they are. It hurts Scarpia to even speak with scum like the Sacristan, but it has to be done. He snarls the news of the convict's escape and probable concealment in the church, and demands the key to the Attavanti chapel. The Sacristan totters over to the gate and to his intense surprise finds it unlocked. He naturally does not know how to keep this to himself, and his innocent astonishment when one of the police discovers the lunch-basket there, *empty*, contributes further to Scarpia's suspicions. "Aha!" says Scarpia, with a swift mental reaction. Then he enters the chapel, and promptly discovers another clew—a little fan, with a coat-of-arms prominently displayed! Scarpia glances at the fan, then at the painted Magdalen, demands the painter's name, and has the whole case in a nutshell! Cavaradossi is the accomplice to the escape! The man shall hang, which will be extremely convenient, as he, Scarpia, has recently found Tosca desirable.

Now Tosca comes back, in rather a hurry, to find Mario and tell him she cannot meet him to-night as they had fondly planned, for she must sing at the Queen's Palace. She is puzzled at not finding him, and not in the least pleased to see Scarpia, who offers her holy water upon his yellow finger-tips. She dislikes to be

rude, so accepts it frigidly, but it is obvious that she finds Scarpia's attentions distasteful. The Sacristan roguishly whispers that no one knows who the painter may have gone off with, and Scarpia declares meaningfully that all ladies are not so virtuous as Floria Tosca, and sometimes come to churches for other purposes than prayer. He lifts an insinuating eyebrow toward the painting, and Tosca perceives his meaning.

"The proof!" she demands angrily, and nothing is simpler. He does not hesitate to lie ruthlessly. "The fan, with the tell-tale monogram, found upon the easel! Hardly a painter's implement!" This is too much for Tosca, who has been more or less upset all the morning, and she weeps and rages alternately. Completely crushed, she allows Scarpia to conduct her to the door, her head filled with but one thought, to trap the treacherous lovers in the villa whither she supposes them to have retired. Scarpia, gloating over the mess he has made, is courteous and urbane until the door is closed, then harshly orders his dogs to trail her, and report to the office.

All this time the populace has been gathering in the church to hear the *Te Deum*. Bells are ringing, while the cannon continues to boom, and the organ plays. But nothing distracts Scarpia, his mind is working clearly and his thoughts are pleasant ones, mental pictures of Tosca in his arms, while Mario and Angelotti swing high upon the gibbet—dreams which he will soon realize, for he always gets what he wants, so he muses darkly. But suddenly the music of the chant breaks through his consciousness, and just as the Cardinal passes, he drops to his knees, murmuring that Tosca even makes him forget God, and joins fervently in the chorus.

ACT II takes place in Scarpia's room in the Farnese Palace. It is evening and he is enjoying a leisurely meal at a little table in the window. His appetite is not good, he is anxiously keeping an eye upon the clock. Soon he rings for his orderly, Sciarrone, who opens the window so he may hear how things are going down in the ballroom, where Queen Caroline is having her festivities. They are dancing a gavotte while waiting for Floria Tosca to arrive, and the music is quite plainly audible as it floats up from the floor below. Scarpia dashes off a note to Tosca for Sciarrone to deliver as soon as she arrives, then goes back to his supper and to his lascivious dreams. He is rudely interrupted by his sleuth-hound, Spoleto, who reports that they trailed Tosca to the villa, and turned the place inside out without finding

Angelotti. Scarpia is furious, he thinks Spoletto had better die, but the clever rogue calms him with the neatly-timed information that they did find Cavaradossi, and so brought him along instead, as doubtless he knows too much for his well-being. Scarpia, proud and gratified, orders in the captive. Cavaradossi enters with several cheerful attendants, including the executioner, and he and Scarpia exchange futile and defiant words.

All through their conversation our ears are straining to hear the lovely music of the *Cantata* which has begun on the floor below, with Tosca's voice soaring high and sweet. We wish they would stop talking so we might listen, but instead, Scarpia orders the window closed. He cross-questions Mario for more information, which he fails to get. The painter is insolent, and thoroughly imprudent.

In the midst of it all, Tosca, having received Scarpia's note, and suspecting all is not as it should be, has lost no time in answering the summons. At sight of her lover in chains she stands rooted to the spot, her cloak dropping to the floor and revealing her to our ravished eyes in all the splendor and glamor of her festival attire. She is glowing and palpitant with love and apprehension, and gorgeously beautiful. In a moment she rushes swiftly to Mario's arms, and he manages a melodious warning to her to reveal nothing of what she saw in his garden this afternoon, before he is dragged from her clinging embrace to a little antechamber where some clever and notorious mechanical contrivances of Scarpia's will presently be demonstrated to him. Tosca, ignorant of the nature of this entertainment, sits down as coolly as she can to chat with Scarpia. He begins by remarking that she no longer seems to be suffering with jealousy, and she replies that her fears were groundless, Mario was alone in the villa. When Scarpia insists that she reconsider, and be certain there was *no one else* there, she replies archly that she will not lie even to keep things upon a pleasant footing. Scarpia, annoyed, hails Sciarrone, who opens the door of the anteroom letting in an unpleasant red glow. Scarpia asks what luck they are having with Cavaradossi. As it is very poor, they must try a little more persuasion. Tosca hears a groan and Scarpia takes pleasure in describing to her its cause. She is frantic, and playing for time by promising to tell the secret, flings herself against the little door and calls to her lover demanding how he fares. Mario replies feebly that he is having a very stiff time, but that he can hold out, and that she must do the same. Scarpia is displeased at the slowing up of the affair, so he promptly has the door flung

wide so that Tosca may miss no detail of the performance within, and at the same time signals for more "persuasion." A ghastly scream is wrung from the victim, and Tosca, beside herself, hoarsely whispers the secret of Angelotti's hiding-place. In a moment the torture is stopped and Mario, decidedly the worse for his adventure, is carried in and deposited on the sofa. Tosca, indifferent to blood and grime, flings her arms about him, crooning over him and mothering him and assuring him that he was dear and brave and never betrayed a word. But Mario is not so far gone that he does not hear Scarpia send off Spoletto hot on the trail to the *garden well*! He springs up, wild with pain and grief, and curses her madly for her treachery, while she can do nothing but cling and weep.

There is a momentary diversion now as Sciarrone rushes in with bad news. The rumor of Napoleon's defeat was false; it has been swallowed up by a great victory for him at Marengo. Cavaradossi is beside himself, and throwing all prudence to the winds, rises up and screams with joy over the victory and the probable downfall of all such tyrants as Scarpia. He has overstepped his privileges and without ceremony he is hustled off to the gallows, still stonily disregarding Tosca's sobs. Now Floria Tosca is indeed in an unpleasant situation, but Scarpia, gloating and delighted, has even regained his appetite. He sits at the table and invites his lovely guest to join him in a glass of wine. Tosca ignores his words, and leaning across the table, looks him straight in the eye. She comes quickly to the point, "How much?"

"What do you mean? How much?"

"The price of his life, what is it?" she insists. Well, if she must know, he is not mercenary, he does not want money, no, he is a good, generous fellow, he will be content with the gift of her *beautiful self*. He leaves his supper and starts toward her with open arms; but the lady is agile, although almost paralyzed with horror she manages to reach the other side of the sofa. When he follows, she makes a dash for the window. Scarpia lumbers after her, singing that anger makes her all the more desirable. She flings open the casement and cries that she will jump; but his repartee is swift, there will be two corpses then, not one. Then she remembers the Queen; she rushes to the door, but the monster gallantly opens it for her, merely reminding her that a Queen's pardon will do a corpse no good. Tosca is indeed in a bad way. Then begins another sinister game of tag around the chairs and tables, when suddenly there comes to their ears the

sound of muffled drums. Scarpia hastily explains that it is Mario Cavaradossi's death march, and the poor distraught woman drops exhausted to her knees in prayer. Now Scarpia has a certain feeling for religious acts; he thinks it best to leave her alone for a moment, so returns to his neglected dinner and begins to peel an apple, watching her from the tail of his eye. She is piteously reminding the Deity in the most beautiful of heartbroken melodies that only Art and Love have been her life, that she has never harmed even a fly, and why, why should she thus have to pay? This aria is one for which the audience have been waiting with bated breath, and at the end some one is always sure to applaud with unmitigated bad taste. If Tosca acknowledges the applause it is unbearable. But back again to the action. Spoletto sticks his ugly head in to announce that at the well they found Angelotti had preferred death to capture, and wishes to know if there are any little instructions about "this here execution."

"How about it, Tosca?" asks Scarpia pointedly, of the miserable lady, who can only breathe, "Yes," and hang her head in shame. But even at this dark moment she has a wit or two left. Mario must be set free then and there.

"That is hardly practical," explains Scarpia; "there must be a mock execution to satisfy the law. You know what I mean, Spoletto, just as we did with poor dear old Palmieri!" he adds to his henchman with meaning emphasis.

Spoletto nods evilly. "Very good, sir, just like Count Palmieri!" and disappears.

Now for it. . . . Scarpia turns to the lady. But she is still game and maneuvering for time. "The safe-conduct for us both out of Rome!" she orders, and the old spider humors his fly, and goes across to his desk. Tosca is feeling very sick by this time, and staggers over to the table for that glass of wine. As she reaches for it her staring eyes rest for a moment upon the sharp knife with which Scarpia had peeled his apple. In another moment she has snatched it into the folds of her gown. When her tormentor comes over to her, babbling of kisses, she pushes the point into his heart with all the strength of her young arm. As he falls she sways above him screaming, "This is Tosca's kiss!" There is a struggle, an effort to crawl to her on distorted limbs, a choking gurgle, and all is over. She stands staring horribly, then beside herself, jeers at him wildly, bidding him smother in his own evil blood. This is not at all like the gentle Floria Tosca, but one must admit that she had every provocation. ^ ^

Now for a few moments there is no voice heard, but so keyed

and strained are we of the audience, that we are quite oblivious of anything but what our eyes behold. The music interprets minutely all that takes place, yet we are only conscious of one complete and harmonious thrill. Tosca, revolted by the blood on her fingers, washes them with a napkin hurriedly, and in a pitiful effort to reëstablish the normal, stops to arrange her hair before the mirror. Then she turns to go out and suddenly remembers the safe-conduct. She runs to the desk. It is not there. With a gasp of horror she sees the paper in the stiffening fingers of the body on the floor. She cannot touch that *Thing* again, but she sets her teeth and finally wrenches it away. A great loathing possesses her; as she rises she carefully pulls away her skirts that not even a thread may touch him. Once more she starts for the door, but the moonlight shining on a crucifix upon the wall inspires a devout act. Returning, she blows out all the candles but two, and these she carefully places one on each side of the dead man's head, always guarding her skirt from contact with him. Gazing wide-eyed, she breathes in awe-stricken tones, "And only yesterday Rome trembled before him!" Then quickly she tears the crucifix from the wall and drops it upon his breast to cover the blood stains, as the orchestra utters a solemn, lingering chord. Slowly she takes up her cloak, and staring back, fascinated with horror at the work of her hands, she opens the door and slips out. We are relieved to know that she is starting for the prison. Human nerves could stand no more.

ACT III. When the curtain rises we see the platform of the Castle of Sant' Angelo in the eerie light which precedes the dawn. At first the stage is empty and our eyes may explore the fascinating, misty panorama of Rome, with the Vatican and St. Peter's dimly visible. Distant bells are ringing for early mass, and a shepherd is singing a song in strange intervals and slight melody, but very plaintive and unreal. A gorgeous Roman banner flies aloft on a tall pole, and one wonders idly how it is made to flap so naturally.

Now a guard mounts up the steps at the right, carrying a lantern, and goes across the stage to a little table near a casement at the extreme left. He lights a small lamp before a statue of the Virgin, then sits down and opens the register of the condemned with a bored air. What is one execution more or less in his life? In a moment a sergeant and guard bring up Cavaradossi. A few formalities are attended to on paper and then the soldiers depart. Their rather dreary little march is very haunting. The

old guard cheerfully tells Mario that he has another hour to live and asks if he wishes the consolation of a priest, but Mario has something else on his mind. He has no money to offer, only a little old ring, but the jailor is sufficiently interested to exchange it for pen and paper when Mario explains that he wishes to write to his sweetheart. When he sits down to write he finds like most of us, that thoughts flow easier than words, and indulges his feelings in a romantic song, "*E lucevan le stelle*" ("By the light of stars"), in which he pours out a great deal of melodious Italian passion and which he concludes with an even more Italian sob.

Suddenly comes a familiar lilting theme, and Floria Tosca hastens up through the hatchway, accompanied by the evil Spoletto, who posts a sentinel to watch (a tactful person who keeps his back turned) and goes down again to attend to weightier matters. Tosca slips over to Mario and surprises him at the end of his sob. His emotion is infectious, she cannot speak, but waves her permit before his astounded eyes. This seems to restore his vocal powers, but, poor soul, his faith in humanity has recently been so jarred that he wants to know at once what Tosca had to pay for this—Scarpia never gives something for nothing. Then she tells him of her adventure of a few hours before. Mario can scarcely believe it, and taking her gentle hands in his, goes into raptures over their prowess, murmuring sweet nothings to the most delicious harmonies. Tosca joins her voice to his and they joyfully plan for their escape after the false execution, ending with a shout of exultation so splendid that even the orchestra stops to listen.

Then we hear again the little death march and up comes Spoletto with his picked firing-squad. Mario is ready for them, doesn't even wish to be blindfolded. He steps jauntily over to the wall, Tosca cheering him on from behind the casement. He is to be an actor just like herself upon the stage, she cautions in a voice which only he is supposed to hear.

"Be sure to fall promptly!" she whispers, and then like every other woman present, covers up her ears. So do we—but only then. It is a pity to miss all of the foregoing scene as some nervous members of the audience always persist in doing.

Only one of the eight guns really goes off, and Mario falls, Tosca approving his artistic realism. Spoletto and his squad file off, covering the body with a cloak.

Tosca is restless and keeps whispering, "Get up, hurry, hurry! Mario, do you hear me?" An hysterical catch in her throat—she pulls back the cloak and sees. . . . Well, of course, like the

unhappy Count of Palmieri's, this mock execution was in itself false, and Mario's troubles are quite over. Tosca's brain reels, all she has strength for are tears and desperate kisses upon the cold lips. But her spirit is not entirely broken after all—she is game to the last. A murmur of angry voices is heard below—Scarpia's murder has been discovered! As Spoleto and the mob rush up the stairs, Tosca hurls her cloak adroitly in the face of the leader, and leaping upon the parapet, with all sunlit Rome for a background, hurls herself to destruction.

(For the satisfaction of the curious—she lands upon a thick mattress, fully four feet below.)

LA TRAVIATA

By GIUSEPPE VERDI

First sung in Venice, 1853

THE story of *La Traviata* ("The Courtesan") is the familiar one of Camille, or *La Dame aux Camélias*, with the names of the principals changed, and the period shifted to what was modern times at the date of the first production, 1853. Subsequently this was once more changed to the days of Louis XIV to please the Viennese audience who liked their opera clothed in the costumes of romance; but for some strange reason the prima donna always retained her modern dress, so that until very recently, and perhaps even now in continental houses, the audience is treated to the droll spectacle of Violetta in the latest of Paris modes, moving among friends clad in the smallclothes, wigs and farthingales of the seventeenth century. But in this opera neither the costumes nor in fact the story, matter a great deal; the music is the thing. Warm, emotional, rich in the prodigal outpouring of melody after melody, it is written primarily to delight the ear and to show off the vocal equipment of the singer, and as a secondary consideration, to express the emotions and complications of the action.

ACT I takes us to the salon of Violetta Valery on the evening of one of her gayest parties. Violetta is the reigning favorite of the Parisian *demi-monde* that year and is surrounded by every extravagant luxury. Her friends flock to her house like bees around a honey-pot. Chief among them are Flora Bervoix, warm of heart though light of morals, and several gentlemen, the Doctor Grenvil, Marquis d'Obigny, Gastone, Viscount de Letorieres and Baron Douphol. The guests are arriving for dinner, and Gastone brings with him a young friend, Alfred Germont, whom he introduces as already a victim of Violetta's charms. She protests prettily that such a thing is not possible, but he assures her that he has been so enamored of such brief glimpses of her as have been vouchsafed him, that during her recent illness he came daily to inquire for her. Violetta is touched, but shakes off the slightest



MISS LUCREZIA BORI AS VIOLETTA IN *LA TRAVIATA*, ACT II

hint of seriousness; it is not *au règle* in her set. By this time dinner has been announced and the guests have seated themselves at a table laden with the most tempting ineditables. Witty small talk is indulged in for a few moments and then as the wine glasses are filled, some one proposes a song. Several of the older gentlemen begging off, Violetta at last induces Alfred, who needs little urging, to show what he can do. This is first of the tenor arias which will be poured lavishly into our delighted ears, "*Libiamo! libiamo!*"—"We'll drink to beauty!" Such a success follows Alfred's effort that all join with him in the chorus and Violetta, rising, continues the refrain herself.

The dinner, barring the wine, seems to create little enthusiasm among the guests, for hearing strains of dance music from the next room, they eagerly abandon food after the merest nibble. Violetta starts to go with them, but is apparently suddenly overcome with some acute affliction and with difficulty holds herself upright by the edge of the table. Her guests are naturally alarmed, but she waves them away. It is nothing—happens often—she only wishes to be left alone. So, with many backward glances of concern, they go toward the dance, only Alfred lingering, unable to tear himself away. Violetta's attack subsides quickly, but he begs her to be more careful of her precious health, more temperate in her mode of living. Violetta is surprised to find that any one cares thus, and Alfred assures her passionately that probably no one but himself does love her to this extent. She still does not take him seriously, and asks if this tremendous love was born in a day. This question gives Alfred the opportunity for his second aria, in which he describes, with typical Italian ornamentation, the happy day when first he saw her, and when his love blossomed at once full-grown. Violetta answers his stanzas with some of her own to the effect that if he really loves her, he would be wise to make his escape at once, for the brand of love which she can offer is not very worthy and he deserves a better fate. Let him find a nice girl who will make him happy—and forget La Traviata!

At this moment, Gastone puts his head in at the door to see what is going on, and Violetta, a bit embarrassed, says that they are talking nonsense. "In that case, continue!" says Gastone amiably, and makes his adieux. Alfred then says he will obey her command and go; but she, womanlike, wonders at his hurry and gives him some flowers from her corsage.

"What for?" asks Alfred, rather impolitely.

"So you may return it to me!" she replies archly, while Alfred,

seizing the flowers in a transport of emotion, declares he will come again to-morrow. She smiles and consents and he takes his leave followed by all the other guests, who have discovered that dawn is approaching and a little sleep desirable.

Left alone, Violetta wonders to herself if at last her jaded heart is touched by real passion, and dwells lovingly upon the charms of this Alfred, which have made such a strong appeal. This is the beginning of that famous and brilliant aria, "*A, fors è lui!*" which has served to show to its best advantage every great coloratura voice from Patti and Sembrich down to little Mlle. Bori. In the midst of her transports poor Violetta remembers her moral stigma and her precarious health, and fears that, after all, normal happiness is not for her. No! Here—with a change to scintillating tempo—she plunges into the second part of the aria, "*Sempre libera,*" in which she vows that in wild dissipation and the pursuit of pleasure can lie her only solace. Upon these rather piteous sentiments, the curtain falls.

ACT II shows the villa in the environs of Paris in which Violetta and Alfred have been living together for some months. The stage directions call for the interior, but some sets show the garden or terrace instead, with very charming effect. Alfred, in clothes known as "sporting," comes in with a gun, which he lays down in disgust, singing that nothing is really enjoyable which takes him away from Violetta, and obligingly informing the audience that three months ago this wonderful lady actually gave up her life of gayety and luxury to join him in this simple country life, quite contented with his society alone. His wonder and joy over this miracle he can best express in another aria, "*Di miei bollenti.*" At the end of this effusion, Annina, Violetta's confidential maid, enters dressed for a journey, and Alfred quite naturally wishes to know her destination. Questioning her closely, he learns that she is going to Paris to complete the sale of her mistress' jewels and carriages. Alfred is amazed, but Annina briskly reminds him that even in the country one cannot live on love alone, and that food and wages and the roof itself have all their price. The impractical Alfred is thus rudely awakened from his rosy dream, and bidding the maid go back to the house, says that he will himself depart straightway for Paris and set things right. Then, as always, overcome with emotion, he relieves his feelings of gratitude and remorse in another lovely aria, before he departs.

No sooner has he gone than Violetta and Annina enter to go

over some business papers. Violetta calls for her lover, and learns that he has gone to Paris, leaving only a message that he would return before evening. She is puzzled by this unusual behavior, but the entrance of Joseph with a note distracts her. Telling the man to admit a notary whom she expects immediately, she opens the letter and is amused to find it an invitation to one of her old friend Flora's parties. Such things interest her no longer. She flings the letter down and turns to greet the gentleman, the supposed notary, whom Joseph is just ushering in. She soon discovers that this is no clerk but Signor Germont, Alfred's father. Almost at once she is on the defensive, resenting his manner of addressing her; and he, impressed by her dignity and gentleness, promptly changes his ways. He is rather amazed at the luxury of the villa, and fears that his son must be sadly in debt to pay for it all, but when he hears that Violetta's own sacrifice has made it possible he is really touched. Her devotion to his son makes his mission all the more difficult, but he plunges desperately in. The fact of the matter is, he has come to ask her to give Alfred up, not only for his own sake, but because of a little sister whose future will be ruined by this *mésalliance*.

Violetta is frozen with horror at the suggestion, and only half listens as the fond parent, in a charming baritone aria extols the purity and virtues of his only daughter. Violetta simply cannot give up her only chance of happiness! It is too much to ask! Quite naturally she repudiates with indignation his rather bald suggestion that she once more transfer her facile affections. Then he appeals to her weakest spot, her love for Alfred himself, and tells her that when she is older she will find great consolation in the thought of her unselfishness, if she relinquishes—and no joy at all if she has ruined his life. Alas, the poor woman realizes that this is probably true, and with a heartbroken gesture, agrees to disappear from Alfred's life. In a tenderly emotional duet, the two sing of the sacrifice she is making, and she adds a forlorn little wish that she might have known a father's love. Then they discuss plans and it becomes cruelly apparent that in order to prevent Alfred from following her, he must be made to think that she no longer cares for him. This will be the hardest of all, but Violetta, having made up her mind to do the right thing, will somehow find strength to carry it through. The old man, however, will linger about to offer consolations when his son faces the blow.

He goes out, and Violetta summons Annina to deliver a letter which she now sits down to write. It is to Flora Bervoix, and

the maid, not having been sent to this address for a long time, is much surprised, but goes obediently on her errand. Now Violetta must write that other and fatal letter. It is cruelly hard to begin, but after all, there can be little to say. She writes a few words and seals the letter just as Alfred himself comes in. Very naturally he is curious to know to whom she writes and even more curious when she tells him frankly that it is to him. She promises that he shall read it later, and he drops the matter for one that troubles him more. He has heard that his father is on his way to make things unpleasant for them both. Violetta pretends terror, and protests that she had best run upstairs and await results; it would be fatal to be caught here before the angry parent is appeased. Then struggling very bravely not to weep, she bids him a farewell the tenderness and fervor of which seems to him acceptable, but rather unwarranted. She runs quickly away.

Alfred, puzzled and a little bored, picks up a book to while away the time; but Violetta has acted with amazing dispatch. Five minutes scarcely elapse before Joseph enters with the startling news that his mistress has departed for Paris in a carriage, with her luggage. Alfred dismisses the excited servant, and tries to explain the departure to himself in some practical way. Suddenly he looks up and sees his father. As he rises to greet him a messenger enters with a letter. It is the same which he saw Violetta writing, and a moment suffices for him to read the incredible news therein. The emotional young man is utterly crushed by the blow, and even the famous and lovely aria about his home in Provence ("*Di Provenza*"), which old Germont now sings in a soothing baritone, fails to comfort him. Jealousy, pursuit, and vengeance are the only thoughts Alfred has time for. He rushes madly from the scene, followed by his agitated parent.

The scene now changes to the party at the home of Flora in town. All our old acquaintances are there and Flora, the Doctor and the Marquis are gossiping about the rumor of the breach between Violetta and Alfred, and the chance of her coming to the party to-night with her new protector, the old Baron Douphol. Now, however, a diversion occurs as a number of gypsies enter and behave in a hilariously Bohemian manner, telling fortunes and playing pranks generally among the more dignified guests. Soon another band, led by Gastone, arrives, costumed as matadors and piccadors, and lustily sing a picturesque ballad anent a famous toreador. Gradually the fun subsides a little and we see Alfred entering, looking very pale and rather fierce. He professes igno-

rance of Violetta's whereabouts, and sitting down at the gambling table, begins to play furiously. As he becomes absorbed in the game, Violetta on the arm of the Baron enters, very brave and fine in a superb toilette and paint to cover the pallor and sadness in her face. Her old friends gather around her to greet her warmly, and Flora draws her to a couch to talk. The gaming at Alfred's table grows somewhat violent—Alfred is winning with startling luck. He grows rather noisy in his excitement, and proclaims with cruel bravado that with his winnings he intends to establish another mistress at his suburban villa. Violetta winces and Gastone reproaches his friend for such brutality. The Baron would like to pick a quarrel, but Violetta restrains him and he contents himself with challenging Alfred's game. But the young man's luck does not yet desert him, and he relieves the Baron of most of his cash before supper is announced and the game broken up.

The stage is empty for a moment, then Violetta runs in breathless and palpitant. She has asked Alfred to meet her for a moment alone and she is afraid that he will refuse. But, no, he is only too eager! She implores him to leave the house at once to escape the dangerous wrath of the Baron, which is rapidly rising, but Alfred spurns the suggestion and rather welcomes the idea of a duel, in which, he sarcastically remarks, he will have the pleasure of ridding her of both a protector and a lover. Violetta is too alarmed to notice his insult, for she fears it will be he who will be killed. Alfred laughs at the idea of *her* caring if he dies. He offers to go only if she will follow and when she says she cannot, demands the reason. So Violetta has to make her hardest sacrifice. "One who has the right to ask, forbids it," she says gently.

"The Baron?" demands her incensed lover.

"Yes!" she admits, hanging her head in shame.

"You love him!" accuses Alfred. Again she admits the falsehood, and Alfred, completely beside himself, dashes to the door and calls the entire company to hear what he has to say. They rush in eagerly, but are dreadfully distressed to hear his rather too melodious account of his betrayal. At the end of his aria, he tears a miniature from his breast and stamps it into bits, in puerile rage. At this undignified exhibition, Violetta swoons and all her friends chorus their indignation, while Father Germont, entering at that moment, also rebukes his son and ventures to prophesy the day when he, knowing more than he does now, will be very penitent. The Baron and others renew their outbursts of resentment,

and assure the slowly reviving Violetta of their loyalty and concern, as father and son depart with speed and the curtain falls.

ACT III. A brief prelude in the orchestra prepares us somewhat for the sad scene the parting curtains reveal. It is the bedroom of Violetta. A month has passed since the unhappy events of the previous act, and her broken heart has made her an easy victim to the last ravages of her fatal disease. Violetta is asleep in the great bed before the fire, and the faithful Annina is nodding in a chair, but starts up instantly at the first signs of waking from her mistress. She brings a glass of water and then pulls back the heavy curtains at the window so that the sick woman may see the morning light. She peers into the street and announces that she sees the doctor approaching. Violetta is touched by his early visit and tries to rise, but falls back exhausted as he enters. She smiles at him rather pitifully and in answer to his question says that although her body suffers a little, her mind at last is tranquil after a visit from the priest. The doctor asks if she has slept, and pretends to be cheered by her symptoms, but to the maid he whispers as he goes out that the sands in Violetta's glass are almost run.

Now Violetta hears sounds of revelry in the street, and on being told that it is Mardi Gras, sends the maid for her purse that she may share her gold with the merrymakers. Annina protests when her mistress leaves only ten *louis* for their own use, but is sadly assured that it is quite enough for her few remaining wants. When she is gone upon her errand, Violetta draws a letter from her bosom which she reads fondly for probably the tenth time. It is from the elder Germont, giving the welcome news that the hot-headed Alfred actually did wound the Baron in a duel, but that it seemed expedient to absent himself until the affair should blow over. On his son's return, the writer assures her, he will be told of her noble sacrifice and will be allowed to come to her and ask forgiveness. Violetta muses happily over such a prospect, but shakes her head sadly, her luck is never good, her lover will come too late. She catches up a little mirror and looks with distaste upon her wasted features which were once the toast of Paris, and with surprising breath control for one expiring of lung trouble, sings an aria of ravishing beauty, "*Addio, del passato*," ending in deep melancholy. She is answered by a bacchanalian chorus from the revellers in the street.

Here Annina suddenly returns almost bursting with the importance of some news she is concealing. She asks if her mistress

feels strong enough to sustain a rather pleasant surprise. Violetta, however, knows already what it must be. In a rush of happy tears she calls to her lover, who hastens through the door. Embracing her with much tenderness and utter disregard for his own health, he holds her close and they sing a luscious duet of the pleasures he fondly believes to be in store for them when they are again united in their Paris home. But Violetta knows it is only a dream, even as she joins her happy voice to his. When she tries to rise with him, however, she totters and almost swoons and he sees with horror how extreme is her condition. She smiles wanly and still tries to deceive him, by calling for her dress and her cloak. When these are brought by the wondering Annina, poor Violetta, in spite of all her courage, cannot find the strength to put them on, and sinks back in despair. Annina goes swiftly for the doctor and so the lovers are left alone to sing for almost the last time of their devotion and regrets.

Germont and the doctor find them in each other's arms, and the father comes gently over to embrace at last as a daughter the woman whose short life he made so miserable. Violetta smiles at him, but says that now it is too late; she would have been so happy to have had his paternal kiss before. Still, she is grateful. She kisses him and whispers to the doctor that she is happy to be dying among all whom she really loves.

Germont is shocked at the word "dying," but the doctor nods—it is true. Saddened, the old man turns away, reproaching himself a bit late for his selfishness, while Violetta, with her last strength, draws out a little miniature of herself, doubtless to replace that which Alfred so brutally trampled on, and gives it to her lover. He naturally is overcome by the pathos of this, and begs her desperately not to leave him just as he has found her again; but to his plea, as well as to his parent's, she is deaf, for at last her pains are ended in merciful death. The curtain falls upon the Germont family in the throes of compunction and grief.

TRISTAN UND ISOLDE

By RICHARD WAGNER

First sung in Munich, 1865

THE very name and authorship of this opera will probably strike terror into the hearts of those who make a special point of always avoiding the "highbrow." Books which offer the story to the uninitiated have their pages liberally sprinkled with tiresome small bars of music which can mean little to any but those who know a good deal about it already, or else the tale is told so tritely as to be quite lost sight of in the revelation later experienced in the opera house. Now *Tristan und Isolde* is no more highbrow than are beauty and love and emotion themselves, and surely these are not exclusively enjoyed by the *Intelligenzia*. As an opera it is neither incomprehensible nor boring, for it is more than an opera. It is a great shimmering, pulsating experience of all that is glorious in romance, passion, life and death; and far from terrifying, it should rather attract with its promise of beautiful, mad, heavenly things—all too rare in this work-a-day world.

The words and action cannot, in the telling, be separated from the effect of the music, for Wagner conceived all three as a harmonious whole, each a part of the other. He employed no librettist and is always himself the author of his poem or text, and is the stage director as well as the composer. The existence of the famous *leitmotifs* should not be alarming. To recognize and name them all is no requisite to the enjoyment of Wagner's works. Yet, in spite of yourself, with their very truth and expressiveness, certain repeated themes will speak to you again and again until almost unconsciously you know, love and understand their significance. That they express musically what is said and felt and done upon the stage is all that you need to know. For instance, to hear the Prelude is to experience emotionally the substance of the whole work.

ACT I. The time is laid in the days so long before yesterday that they have no date: the days of adventure, of unrestrained passions, of chivalry, sorcery, courage and cruelty. ♫

When the curtain goes up we see the forward deck of a splendid, barbaric ship. The beam ends are carved and painted, the sails of flaming color, while this special space is enclosed and hung with brilliant tapestries and silks to make a pavilion for a royal passenger. The Irish Princess Isolde is on her way to become the bride of Mark, the King of Cornwall, who has quite properly sent his best ship and a picked escort for her journey. But Isolde is unimpressed—in fact passionately unhappy over the whole affair. We first see her flung face down upon a couch, her wonderful red hair streaming out over her shoulders against the dark fur coverings. She seeks oblivion, but is disturbed by a sailor up in the rigging singing a windy, swaying song, like the motion of the waves. It is only a farewell to an Irish colleen he has left behind, but Isolde, whose nerves are already on edge, is quick to resent it, and flinging back her head angrily, she calls to her serving woman, Brangäne, who stands at the side, peering through the curtains at the sea. Like all travelers, Isolde demands continually, "Where are we now?" and this time Brangäne says joyfully that the green shores of Cornwall are at last visible. Her words have a startling and devastating effect on the royal lady. She rises from the couch, and pacing the deck like a caged beast, calls passionately on all the powers of Heaven and Hell to immediately sink the ship and all on board. The music rages and storms with her, the orchestra tries to dash the boat to pieces, the violins tremble with Isolde's overwrought nerves. Brangäne, bewildered by her mistress' uncontrolled behavior, runs to her full of devoted concern. Her adoration and dog-like faithfulness are reflected in the orchestra as she embraces the wildly excited Princess and tries to lead her gently back to the couch, begging humbly for her lady's confidence, eager to share the trouble.

But Isolde does not care to be quieted. "Air! Give me air!" she cries, stifled in her own fury. So Brangäne pulls back the heavy hangings and reveals the full length of the ship and the sea beyond. Near the mainmast the crew are busy with ropes and various nautical perplexities, while behind them are knights and pages and men-at-arms. Beside the tiller stands the handsomest of them all, Sir Tristan, the leader and pride of Cornwall. He should be very glad indeed that Brangäne has opened the curtains, it must have been somewhat of a strain to steer from where he stood behind them. However, this view of her fellow passengers does not distract Isolde for a moment; if anything, it inflames her the more, and she mutters darkly to herself words evidently concerning Tristan, whose presence moves her strangely.

Then with lightning change of mood, she turns to the anxious girl hovering by her. "What do you think of that knight up there?" she asks casually.

"Do you mean Sir Tristan?" asks Brangäne, wondering. She goes easily into raptures over his excellent qualities; it seems that his popularity is widespread.

"Yes," replies Isolde acidly, "I mean the knight who is a coward. If you do not believe me, go to him and say I wish to speak with him. You shall see he will be afraid to come." The orchestra is as bitter and arrogant as the lady herself when she utters the words, "I, Isolde, I command it!"

Brangäne repeats this carefully and exactly, as soon as she has picked her way through the groups of sailors to Tristan. He is polite but firm, he feels certain that the ship would never make port safely should he take his eyes from the helm. Brangäne stubbornly reiterates the message. Then an old man, extremely uncouth in personality, but whose devotion to Tristan is as touching as Brangäne's to Isolde, jumps up and making a rude rejoinder or two, bursts into a ribald song full of praise for his master, but containing bald allusions to a severed head which a certain lady once received as a gift from Cornwall. Tristan tries to make the old fellow stop, while Brangäne, her feelings completely outraged, runs back to the pavilion and hastily draws the curtains. She starts to blurt out her difficulties at her mistress' feet. Isolde, however, frozen into helpless rage, has heard it all. Her calm is of the deadly variety; she resolves to unburden her soul, lest she break with the strain.

Then follows what is known as *Isolde's Narrative*, an opportunity sometimes chosen by the novice for a short and peaceful nap. Drink strong coffee, if necessary, to fortify oneself beforehand, but stay awake. This tale is quite worth it, as Isolde's voice and the instruments of the orchestra aid in unfolding the most romantic of events.

It appears that not long ago, a doughty Irish knight, to whom Isolde was betrothed, Morold by name, was sent to collect a certain overdue account from the Cornwall customs. His reception was unexpected and disagreeable. After a violent argument which concluded in the general spilling of gore, Morold's head upon a pike was dispatched as a souvenir to the Irish court. However, the unfortunate man managed to leave his mark upon his adversary before he expired, and Sir Tristan found himself the possessor of an ugly wound which refused to heal. After losing much flesh, and growing daily more miserable, Tristan was per-

suaded as a last resort to seek the Princess Isolde's famous healing art. In order to do this he thought it advisable to change his name, but he was not very subtle about his *alias*, calling himself "Tantris," and this, plus the fact that a sword splinter found in Morold's skull fitted neatly into a nick in Tristan's sword, gave Isolde the clue she needed. She took up that same sword to make short work of her revenge upon the helpless invalid. Then suddenly their eyes met—one has only to listen to the orchestra to learn just *how* they gazed, and the overwhelming result! The sword dropped from her hand, her knees trembled. She rejected fiercely the idea that love could be born between her and the murderer of her betrothed, but such was the appalling fact, although they both immediately tried to pretend that it was nothing of the kind. After all, it was doubtless only one of the first instances of the familiar story, the beautiful nurse and the big man, sick and helpless. At any rate, she cured him and he went away, hopelessly confused in his mind, while she vainly tried to revive her vengeful mood.

Now, to add insult to injury, this Tristan has the temerity to come back in all his glory to woo her for his King. It is entirely too much for any woman to stand—surely Brangäne must see how she feels. Brangäne does in a measure, but it seems to her that Isolde is a little more excited than the facts warrant. Evidently her simple mind has not taken in to what extent the Princess' heart has been affected. She tries a number of soothing suggestions about the joys of being a King's wife; but Isolde is not listening, she is still muttering to herself about unrequited love.

Brangäne catches the last word only, and has a brilliant idea. Isolde need not worry over love, or anything else of that nature, for her mother at parting entrusted Brangäne with a most complete First Aid equipment, in which are included salves, tonics, antidotes, poisons, and best of all a most reliable Love Philter. At last Isolde shows a spark of interest, and wishes to inspect the box. Brangäne brings it; and Isolde, listening to her maid's words describing each bottle, finally herself snatches up the deadliest of all the poisons with a gesture of the greatest satisfaction. The solution of her difficulties has come to her at last. How terrible, how fatal is her idea, the orchestra tells us ominously.

Then very suddenly Kurvenal bursts in upon them without ceremony and advises them to begin packing, as they will dock very shortly. Isolde refuses point blank to be hurried, and impresses Kurvenal with the fact that she will set no foot on shore before she has talked with his master. Kurvenal realizes that she means

what she says and departs as rudely as possible. When the curtains have fallen behind him, Isolde seizes Brangäne impulsively in her arms and kisses her. "Good-by, my good Brangäne. Carry my best love to my father and mother!"

"Princess, what do you mean . . . good-by?" stammers the faithful woman. But Isolde is again as cold as ice after her burst of emotion.

"Go over there and prepare at once a cup from that last bottle we spoke of!" She does not flicker an eye-lash in response to the poor woman's ravings and pleadings, merely reminding her gently what she herself said about her mother's forethought in equipping her with such excellent medicines. Then, accompanied by the orchestra, with great shudders of emotion she strides over to her couch and turning, faces with superb *hauteur* Sir Tristan, who is just entering through the curtains.

He sees at once that something is decidedly wrong. They argue frigidly for a little while, each persistently misunderstanding the other, then suddenly come directly to the point. If Isolde really wishes still to avenge Morold's death, now is as good a time as any, Tristan suggests, and offers her his familiar sword. But Isolde will not touch it. She can see in imagination King Mark's face when he meets his bride with the corpse of his favorite knight as a dowry! No, she prefers to make peace in her own way. How about drinking to it together? Tristan, although practically certain that this drink will be far from beneficial, squares his shoulders gamely and says that he will join her. So Brangäne is told to prepare the drink. The poor girl is distracted; it is absolutely unfair to ask this of her! In her desperation an idea comes to her, and quickly, as no one is noticing her, she empties the *Love Philter* into the cup instead of the desired cold poison. Isolde and Tristan have seen nothing, they are dazed with thoughts of what is just ahead of them, Tristan even murmuring feverish words about how little Isolde guesses the secret of his heart. Then the sailors begin to reef and draw in their sails; in a moment it will be too late.

Isolde takes the cup from Brangäne's icy fingers and offers it impressively to Tristan. As he drinks she watches fascinated; then, before he reaches the dregs she snatches it from him and drains it herself with magnificent abandon. The cup falls from her nerveless fingers and, staring at each other as if hypnotized, the two wait for their last agony. Now suddenly something strange, powerful, bewildering, races through the orchestra as the fluid enters their veins. The music trembles and shudders with the



OLIVE FREMSTAD AS ISOLDE, ACT II

force of it as the two upon the stage are beginning to do. It gathers power, and beating upon our ears with an overwhelming, almost suffocating emotion, evolves into an enchanted repetition of that theme which described the birth of their love back in the other days. With a tremulous vibrating cry of "Tristan!" and his shaken answer, "Isolde!" they are swept into each other's arms on a flood-tide of rapture.

Brangäne, utterly aghast at the result of her little substitution, is in a panic. She hastily calls up the other serving women and they put on Isolde's festive cloak and crown as well as they can. The sailors shout and sing, the knights call to their friends on shore, the curtains are pulled back, everywhere there is wild excitement, yet Tristan and Isolde are perfectly oblivious, and never cease embracing except to question each other ecstatically, "When did you begin to feel this way about me?" as lovers always have and always will. Brangäne cannot separate them, she is hysterical with guilty fear; for this tableau can hardly be expected to inspire the waiting King with very much pleasure. Fortunately, just at the moment of debarkation, when every one at last can see them, Isolde's overwrought nerves give way and she faints in Tristan's arms. This, of course, *can* be explained somehow, but up to the fall of the curtain the orchestra goes on telling us that it is no use, nothing can stop them now—the momentum of love and passion is only gathering power!

ACT II. Before the curtain rises the orchestra talks to us a little just to be sure we are in the mood to appreciate and understand the wonderful things that are about to happen. It is only a little poem concerning a long day of waiting that is almost agony, of a struggle of suppressed desires and ardors. Our ears can understand it as well as if the actual words were spoken. Then the curtain rises to show the walls of a stern old castle, which give on a lovely garden, while on the right is the first fringe of trees bordering the forest. It is moonlight. In the distance sound the horns of a midnight hunt in which King Mark is indulging, which grow fainter and fainter (the musicians withdrawing, we are told, even to the rearmost corridors back stage for the last silvery echoes). On the stage a great white moth flutters down the stone steps from a lighted tower. It is the Queen Isolde, her clinging garments shimmering, her glorious loosened hair covered with a silver scarf. She is listening eagerly to the horns. The mad racing of her heart, the unbearable impatience now that fulfillment is almost at hand, is conveyed with exquisite fidelity by

the orchestra. Brangäne appears on the steps and she too is listening. She says prosaically that the hunt is still near by, but Isolde and the orchestra insist that the sounds are only the rustling of the leaves, the rippling of the brooks. Isolde is bent upon putting out the torch burning on the wall at once, thus signaling Tristan to come safely from his hiding-place in the woods, but Brangäne is cautious and circumspect. She did not like the look of a certain Sir Melot on the day they arrived. He showed a little too much interest in Isolde's attack of faintness, and she is perfectly certain that he planned this unusual night hunting party for some dark purpose of his own.

"Nonsense!" ejaculates the Queen, who is in a mood to love everybody to-night. "He is a great friend of Tristan's. Don't be so depressing!"

But Brangäne only hopes she may never have cause to say, "I told you so!" and then goes back again to the subject of the Love Philter, wishing for the hundredth time that she had never touched the thing. What a life it is leading them! Isolde is weary of hearing about this every day.

"You know, Brangäne, I have never blamed you. It was all arranged for us by the Goddess of Love; it has been ordained from the Beginning!"

Then she puts an end to all argument by suddenly extinguishing the torch. Brangäne, shrugging her shoulders, leaves her, and Isolde runs up the steps, and unfastening her scarf, leans far out and waves it in great curves of soft white, as a further signal to her lover. The orchestra takes up the flimsy stuff and waves it with her, the musical gesture is unmistakable, but in another moment it drops the scarf and trembles with a wonderful thrill of anticipation, plunging on headlong, working itself up into a restless hysteria of expectation, longing, and frantic impatience. Isolde runs eagerly toward the trees, she sees Tristan approaching and cannot wait. The music rushes by her, it beats with her heart and surges and swells and seethes with ecstasy as at last the lovers are in each other's arms. If they had not met, in another moment the nerves of the audience would surely snap with the strain.

So, whispering together, they wander to a stone bench, and there embracing, as far as the material world is concerned, pass into complete oblivion.

For long the stage is empty of any action, but the play of deep emotional passion leaps like witch-fire before our eyes. Our ears are seduced by an orchestra in which the human voices of the

lovers on the stage are only added instruments, suffocating us in an actual transport toward the essentials of Love and Rapture. If there is in the audience one individual who can sit through this scene unmoved, then he or she is a child of tender years or else utterly deaf. As Kobbé recently said, "There is nothing in the realms of music or poetry to compare with it in suggestiveness," but it is transfigured with the very elements of purest ecstasy.

It seems quite unnecessary to know what the lovers are murmuring to each other—words make so little difference when music speaks so poignantly, yet what Tristan and Isolde say is very beautiful. They sing of their hatred for the bright day which brings all worldly splendors and ambition, and hypocritical activities, because it keeps them from each other, an unbearable agony. But the night, with its soft and shielding darkness, that is when the beautiful flower of their love blooms. How wonderful it would be if they might die together in one of these moments of passion and never again face the dreadful dawn of separation. The idea takes hold of their imaginations, they play upon it rapturously. But practical Brangäne has been up on the tower all this time, and she now breaks in upon their transports, calling out that she can see the first streaks of sunrise. It scarcely interrupts them, however; they sing blissfully, rashly on of their alluring, mystic *Love Death*. Again Brangäne calls, and they hear, but in ecstasy and foolhardiness defy the dawn. Once more passion floods the stage, but only for a little while. As the early morning light reveals the lovers in each other's arms, there is a shriek from Brangäne as she rushes down the tower stairs, and old Kurvenal comes stumbling in, frantically begging Sir Tristan to save himself. But there is no time: King Mark and his whole hunting party are on the scene before the lovers realize what has happened. Sir Melot, just as Brangäne prophesied, is pointing at Sir Tristan, and exultingly shouting, "Ha—what did I tell you!" at the King.

But this king is without exception the politest man in history. Instead of running Tristan through with his spear, or at least ordering his immediate demise, he merely stands looking reproachfully at them and talking. He talks a little too much, perhaps, for such a moment, but whatever the poor man does, he should be pardoned, for the surprise has been exceedingly upsetting. He patiently repeats at some length his one mental reaction, "What has caused this unfortunate state of affairs?" and finds no answer. Poor King Mark, he is tiresome, slow to action, but after all, how many like him in the world, gently, weakly, dazedly polite before

something much too big for them ever to experience themselves! Out of their very weakness, King Mark's music makes for all such a certain simple beauty of character.

Tristan, feeling that Mark can really never understand, gathers himself together enough to say that there is absolutely no use in trying to explain. Then he turns to the weeping Isolde, before whom he has held his cloak, that the knights might not see her confusion. "Isolde," he asks softly, "will you follow me to that dark, forbidding land which was my early home?"

Isolde lifts her frightened face and pushes back the heavy veil of her hair. To any land where Tristan leads, she will follow, even to the dark realm of death, she sobs. Then Tristan very solemnly bends and kisses her forehead. But this is too much for Melot to endure. Mark's passive acceptance of things is driving him mad; he considers Tristan's effrontery unbearable, and draws out his sword with a threat. Tristan is ready for him. In a few well-chosen words he turns the tables on Melot, accusing him of treachery inspired by jealousy, then leaps toward him. But the weapons do not clash, for Tristan deliberately drops his so that Melot's shall pierce his breast. Kurvenal catches him as he falls, and Isolde flings herself down beside him. King Mark, courteous and considerate as ever, merely holds Sir Melot back from any further outrages upon his victim. The curtain falls.

ACT III. If you have ever been consumed with fever during severe illness, if you have ever waited desperately for a letter or for news which did not come, if you have ever longed so for something that you could not have that your whole body ached, if you have ever missed some one so that there was no perfume in flowers, no flavor in food, no light in the sun and no sleep in the night—then the music of the first scene will bring utterly painful remembrance. If happily you have escaped all such horrors, then listen with equal attention, for it will bring keen understanding and sympathy.

A little sadness, a little desolate despair from the orchestra and the curtain rises showing us the terrace of Tristan's shabby old castle on the coast of Brittany. Evidently the expenses of his life at the Cornwall court did not allow much surplus for the upkeep of his ancestral home, for everywhere are signs of ruin and neglect. But poor Tristan is beyond caring for such things now. In the center of the stage, under a great tree he lies, terribly ill, from the wound which Melot gave him, and beside him sits his faithful, uncouth old nurse, watching every breath. At the back we see

the wide ocean, empty and gray. Kurvenal has posted a young shepherd on the battlements to watch for a sail, for in utter desperation the old man has sent to Cornwall for Isolde and her healing arts, and she should soon arrive. The shepherd can see no promising sign; the forlorn hopeless notes of his pipe beat upon our ears and upon Tristan's with sickening little red-hot hammers. He stops piping a moment and peers over the wall to ask how the sick man is getting along, but when Kurvenal shakes his head he scrambles back and goes on with his tune. But Tristan has heard! He opens his eyes and asks what are those familiar maddening notes. Kurvenal is so glad to see some signs of life that he very foolishly tells him of the ship which must now be on the way, bringing Isolde. No experienced nurse would have dared thus to excite a patient, but the rough old fellow is as ignorant as he is devoted. He is appalled at the inevitable effect of his words—Tristan plunged into the ravings of delirium.

"Oh, dear!" some benighted members of the audience are certain to complain at this point. "He is so tiresome and long about dying!" Admitted that the stage picture is monotonous and repellent for a bit, the eyes can always be closed while one only listens. All that Tristan remembers of his romance from the moment when Isolde first held the sword above the supposed Tantris, through the terrible day when they drank, as they thought, to their mutual death, and up to the glorious nights of exaltation and the fulfillment of their love in the garden of King Mark's castle—Tristan's fevered brain recalls it all, the orchestra recreating each memory in the shimmering, colorful themes which we remember. The flow of his dreams is not smooth, they are as fantastic as the natural course of delirium. Every once in a while the thread is broken—he thinks he sees Isolde coming to him—he holds out his arms—*emptiness*—desperate burning hopelessness—yearning that scalds like the hot poison in his wound . . . then back again to another memory of their bliss together.

Poor Kurvenal tries in his rough way to soothe him, and humors him at last by himself going to the walls to watch, when the sick man fervidly declares that he is certain he sees the ship. And he is right, for suddenly the shepherd changes his tune, the notes are happy, exultant. The ship is indeed in sight, and Kurvenal joyfully answers Tristan's frantic questions as to how it looks and how it is making the dangerous little harbor. Kurvenal runs down to meet them as soon as Isolde's voice is heard, and now that the great moment is at hand, Tristan is not able to meet its rapture. Insanely he starts up. Isolde will heal all his suffer-

ings! Most frantically and unpleasantly he rips the bandage from his wound and staggers to the feet of his beloved just as she rushes up the slope. She catches him, calls him. He faintly answers her name, but it is their last greeting, just as it was the first of their awakened love when the magic potion ran through their veins. The orchestra sadly recalls that moment as Tristan dies. It is quite terrible, the realization of this tragedy; the awful thought that it could have been avoided, answered by the fatal, "It was to be."

From that time on until the end the harassing iteration of the thought, "Too late . . . Too late!" carries on the scene. As Isolde swoons over the dead body of her lover, there is a confusion on the ramparts, another ship is arriving. Kurvenal, blinded by the sorrow of Tristan's death, thinks it once more a party of avengers, and mobilizes his pitiful little army of defenders. But the old gates are too shaky and after a perfectly futile struggle, in which Kurvenal has the satisfaction of killing Melot and then, himself mortally wounded, staggers down to die beside his master, King Mark and his knights, with Brangäne, rush on the scene.

Brangäne runs to her fainting mistress, still babbling of her foolishness about the Love Philter, but she has finally found courage to confess the whole thing to King Mark. All is forgiven. The king himself, gentle and wordy as ever, confirms what she says. But their words fall on deaf ears. He sadly looks around to see—"Death! All dead!" But not yet. . . . Isolde is mysteriously rising from her swoon. Her wide eyes are fixed on Tristan; she kneels above him smiling; and the sun seems to come out and shine upon the lovers. Slowly, softly she begins to sing. It is the *Liebestod*, an echo of that passionate wish of theirs expressed so long ago, to die together in a moment of rapture. But this is the dilation of reality, the moment has come . . . Isolde's soul is uniting with his. The orchestra which began quietly the familiar sweetness of their *Love-Song*, bears Isolde's voice up and up in a frenzy of fulfillment. Over the thunder and rushing floods of death the serene exaltation rises higher and higher. There is no more contact with the tangible world, something infinitely more true, more beautiful, more mystic, is surging through the whole breathless opera house. Gradually it wanes in volume, as its inner power increases to a transcendent white climax of all that is ecstatic on the heights away beyond the power of most of us to touch in a life-time. The crisis of unearthly emotion at last drains Isolde's body of her mortal life and she sinks upon Tristan's heart.

The curtain falls.

IL TROVATORE

By GIUSEPPE VERDI

First Sung in Rome, 1853

No one is expected to take the story of this opera seriously. It is an involved tale of blood and thunder after the best pattern of the very old-fashioned melodrama. The characters of Manrico, the hero, and of Leonora, his sweetheart, have no more resemblance to flesh-and-blood human beings than the sawdust dolls in a puppet show, and were the latter possessed of robust vocal cords they could perform the rôles with entire satisfaction. There is, however, one character into which has been infused some measure of lifelike and interesting behavior, that of Azucena, the old gypsy mother, who carries upon her bent shoulders the entire dramatic weight of the opera. The complicated framework which the librettist has constructed has but one use—to sustain valiantly the tremendous weight of inspired melody which Verdi, working in the full prime of his powers, has hung lavishly upon every possible projection. However, in spite of its quaint absurdities, *Trovatore* is probably the best known of all operas and shares with *Faust* and a very few others first place in the affections of the masses.

In order to have any understanding at all of what will transpire upon the stage, we must review some tragic events which took place before the action begins. These will be retailed in melodic narrative by Ferrando and Azucena, at several times during the play, but will not serve to enlighten the confusion of the average listener's mind to any marked degree, so it will be better to digest it in the first place.

It is a gruesome tale of a gypsy found one day bending over the cradle in which lay the eldest son of the Count di Luna. The baby's attendants, believing the woman a witch and holding her responsible for the infant's subsequent ill health, carry the tale to the father, who promptly has the poor old creature burned at the stake, in spite of her protests that she did the child no harm. Her daughter, Azucena, then a young woman holding her first-born in her arms, was present at the horrible scene of the execu-

tion, and hearing her mother's dying shriek for vengeance took up the vow as her own. While the flames were still raging she stole to the castle and snatched from his bassinet the second son of the Count. Reaching again the flaming stake she promptly threw, as she thought, the noble infant into the furnace. On recovering a little from her wild frenzy, however, she suddenly looked down at the child in her arms, and discovered that she had made a frightful error and had burned up her own baby. Her first deed of vengeance thus frustrated in such a ghastly manner, she did not lose heart, but allowed the deception to stand; and promptly escaped to the mountains with the little boy whom she named Manrico. She brought him up as her own solely for the purpose of achieving her vengeance against his family.

And now being in clear possession of these horrid facts, you may safely bend your attention to the sequel which the rising curtain will disclose.

ACT I begins in an anteroom of the palace of Aliafera, where soldiers are on guard outside the apartments of the Count di Luna. (He is the oldest of the two babies, the one Azucena's mother was supposed to have bewitched. Whether she did or not is a question, but it is certain that he has not turned out well.) He is a coward, and the unprincipled villain of the piece. He has had these soldiers placed here to-night to capture a certain young troubadour in case he again serenades from the garden the lovely Leonora, with whom the Count is madly in love.

The men are rather bored by this sort of assignment, and to while away the time beg their leader, Ferrando, to entertain them with the old tale of the murder of the Count's infant brother. Nothing loath, he rises and sings "*Abbietta Zingara*," and as we already know the gory details we are free to listen with much pleasure to this first aria of the opera, an especially good one for a secondary character like Ferrando. The listening soldiers are properly horror-struck by the tale, and say so; and having served their purpose are hidden from our sight as the scene changes.

Now we have a beautiful park outside the palace, and Leonora with her lady-in-waiting, Inez, has come out to enjoy the evening air. Leonora's thoughts are not upon the scenery, however, but dwelling fondly upon a young and handsome knight who carried all before him at the last tournament and later came to serenade her beneath her window. In order to impress Inez and relieve her own feelings, she sings of this event in an aria of much quoted beauty, "*Tacea la notte placida*." This by no means exhausts her

resources; she follows it almost immediately by another and even finer, "*Di tale amor.*" Her raptures do not entirely please Inez, who is psychic and feels that in some way trouble is brewing.

The ladies retire into the castle, and without delay the Count comes prowling into the garden, wrapped in a black cloak. No sooner is he there than the troubadour, from some safe spot, begins his customary lay, the tenor romanza, "*Deserto sulla terra.*" It is the hero's voice, but he prudently remains out of sight. Leonora is more impetuous, and hearing the song, naturally supposes that the black-cloaked gentleman in the shrubbery is her lover. As she is about to throw herself into his arms she realizes her mistake, and turns to see the real hero just approaching. He is a hero indeed, for he flings off his mask and announces without hesitation that he is Manrico, follower of the Prince of Biscay, and thus the enemy of all these dwellers of Aragon. Very naturally the Count draws his sword, but out of consideration for the ladies they go off to fight it out elsewhere. They need not have bothered, for Leonora is quite unconscious in a deep swoon.

ACT II. This is the gypsy camp among the mountains of Biscay. Azucena is seated brooding darkly beside a fire, and at her feet is Manrico, resting from his martial duties. All around are the members of the tribe, who for the greater part work industriously at a number of little forges, beating their hammers and singing the more than famous *Anvil Chorus*, to the great delight of every one except Azucena, who in spite of the passage of years still broods incessantly on her mother's painful end and the attendant events. Her first aria, "*Stride la vampa,*" alludes to the torturing flames, and is a truly magnificent exposition of passionate hatred cloaked in imaginative melody. Manrico and others listen eagerly and take up her cry of vengeance, then the gypsies, resuming their own affairs to the diminishing strain of the *Anvil Chorus*, wander off and leave the mother and son together. Manrico, having noticed a few discrepancies in his mother's story, now for the first time suspects that he is not her son, but she, panic-stricken that in the passion of her memories she let the cat out of the bag, hastens to soothe him and confuse him again. She reminds him how, on the recent battlefield where he was left for dead, she sought him out and has healed his wounds. Who but a real parent would be able to accomplish such an act? But speaking of battlefields, reminds her to ask why, the other night, when he had the Count di Luna at his mercy in that duel, he did not make an end of him at once.

Manrico replies in an aria which although beginning with martial vigor and dash, ends rather dreamily. He does not really know just why he spared his enemy, some unseen power seemed to withhold his sword. Of course, we know it was a survival of brother love, although unrecognized, and Azucena knows it too, and it worries her. They are now interrupted by Ruiz, a messenger from the Prince's headquarters, with orders for Manrico to assume command of the forces defending Castellor. He bears the added information that Leonora, supposing Manrico dead on the field of honor, is about to take the veil in a neighboring convent. Manrico appears frightfully concerned over this and, although in a great hurry to reach Leonora in time to prevent her final vows, besides arriving punctually at his command in Castellor, he yet pauses for one more melodious duet with Azucena, before departing.

The scene changes to the cloister of the convent. Manrico is not the only one who has had the idea of intercepting Leonora's religious retirement. The Count is already here, with Ferrando and several followers, and while waiting, sings of his love for the lady and particularly of the charm of her smile. This aria, "*Il balen*," is one of the most famous in existence for baritones, and never fails to bring forth rapturous shouts of "*Bis!*" and "*Encore!*" Pleased with his success, the Count sings another and more martial refrain, ceasing only as a procession of nuns, with Leonora and Inez, comes chanting upon the scene. The Count, without stopping to explain, rushes toward the beautiful novice; but suddenly another figure steps between. It is Manrico, springing up from nowhere in particular, and evidently backed by forces far superior to the Count's. Stopping only long enough to join in a pleasing trio, he carries off the prize. Leonora is again in a fainting condition, for she had supposed her lover dead, and can with difficulty sustain the joy of this surprise.

ACT III represents the besieging forces at the foot of the walls of Castellor, which fortress you remember to be in charge of Manrico, and whither, we now learn, he has carried his bride. None other than the Count di Luna commands the attack. His soldiers love to sing, as we once before observed, and they now give us a splendid chorus which, beginning with the word "*Squilli*," often causes merriment among English-speaking auditors.

Presently the Count strolls out from his tent and bends a black brow upon the defying fortress. As he stands nursing his ill-humor, some of the soldiers drag in Azucena, whom they have

discovered prowling about the camp. As she struggles fiercely, something in her rebellious words and cries of hatred recalls another scene to old Ferrando, and he states that he is certain she is the gypsy who was supposed to have flung the Count's infant brother into the flames. As Azucena becomes wilder and wilder in her laments and denials she finally calls upon "her son" Manrico to save her. With this added evidence against her the Count hesitates no longer, and takes pleasure in condemning her to a fate similar to her mother's.

There is a change of scene and we see the interior of the fortress, just outside the chapel where Manrico fatuously awaits his bride and sings with lyric beauty of "*Amor, sublime amor.*" Leonora, entering, seems alarmed at the warlike sounds outside the castle, and Manrico, although admitting a bit of danger, comforts her with the assurance that she will witness a great victory on the morrow. After he has sung another short aria, they start toward the chapel for the ceremony, only to be halted by the constantly disturbing Ruiz, who this time bids him but look from the window to know the worst. Gasping with horror, Manrico gazes upon the funeral pyre in process of erection for the extermination of his mother; and only lingering long enough to sing the famous "*Di quella pira*" and exhibit his high C, rushes off with his retainers in a sortie of rescue.

ACT IV. Although hugely enjoying with vociferous *bravos* each and every solo and concerted number throughout the previous acts, the Latin element of the audience has really been waiting for the great *Miserere* which is now imminent. Apparently Manrico's expedition of rescue was a failure, for now he is imprisoned in the dungeon of Aliafera together with the condemned Azucena. We see, however, the outside of the tower only, and Leonora arriving escorted by Ruiz. She is not perfectly sure exactly how she can accomplish her lover's release, but she is willing to go to any length. Standing beneath his prison window, she speeds her tender thoughts to him upon the wings of song, and then the *Miserere* begins. First are heard the voices of an unseen chorus intoning the death chant, then the protest of Leonora, and finally the lament of Manrico from within the tower. This is probably the most familiar excerpt from opera on record; hurdy-gurdies, phonographs, and the blight of uncounted amateur renderings have done their best to ruin it, but the thing is immortal, and when the last notes have died away and the rafters ring with the shouts of the standees, we find ourselves applauding until our gloves burst, and

quite overlooking the strange operatic license which permits Manrico to emerge momentarily from his cell and acknowledge our tributes. Apparently Leonora is afflicted with momentary blindness, for when the opera is permitted to resume its course, she gives no evidence of having seen her lover, and begs pitifully for his release as the stern Count di Luna appears. The Count very naturally tells her that she is only wasting her breath, until she hits upon a proposition which interests him: her hand in marriage in return for Manrico's life! As all his malicious plotting has been to achieve that very end, he consents at once and joins with her in a triumphant duet, "*Vivra! Contende il giubilo*"—But her enthusiasm is from quite a different cause, for just a moment before, she has, hidden from him but in full sight of the audience, consumed the poisonous contents of a ring she wears, and so assures us that the Count will clasp only her corpse as his bride.

Reminding each other of their rather involved promises, they enter the prison to effect Manrico's release.

In the last scene we enter the dungeon a moment ahead of them and so come upon one of the most touchingly beautiful episodes of the opera, that in which Manrico urges his mother to forget her terror and try to sleep. She is, as ever, reviewing the hideous execution of her mother and imagining the similar sufferings in store for her. Finally by his gentleness and concern he quiets her so that she begins to dream of her beloved hills of Biscay, and in one of the best loved of all operatic duets, they sing together, "*A nostri monti*" (Back to our mountains"). As they finish, Leonora, the Count and some soldiers enter, and she runs to embrace her lover and tell him the good news; but Manrico has not had dealings with the Count for nothing all this time. He knows that some large and extortionate ransom has been paid for such clemency and with some impatience, promptly suspects Leonora. She is at this moment feeling far from well, and has not the strength to argue with him, so he flies into an entirely unreasonable rage at her apparent willingness to give him up, and only upon the realization that she is about to expire does he retract his harsh words and tunefully repent with much emotion.

Leonora, having incorrectly timed the swallowing of her poison, now sinks lifeless, and the Count realizes that he has been duped and hastens to recoup. Manrico is seized by the soldiers and borne off without delay to a convenient scaffold. His farewell sob to his mother having roused her from her pleasing dreams of home, Azucena rises up and rushes about frantically calling his name. The Count, in gruesome enjoyment of his ghastly ven-

geance, pulls her to the casement just in time to witness the head fall under the ax. He stands back with a satisfied air and announces the end, but is startled to observe a wild and uncanny exultation upon the old hag's countenance. "Aha," she cries, "you have merely beheaded your own brother!" and instantly dies, serene in the knowledge that her *vendetta* is accomplished.

The Count is much upset by this dénouement, and exclaims with horror at his own inability to live on in such a mess; but what he does about it we never know, for the curtain, having shown us enough of violent deeds, wearily descends.



